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James B. Button

my dear

Friend

Grand father

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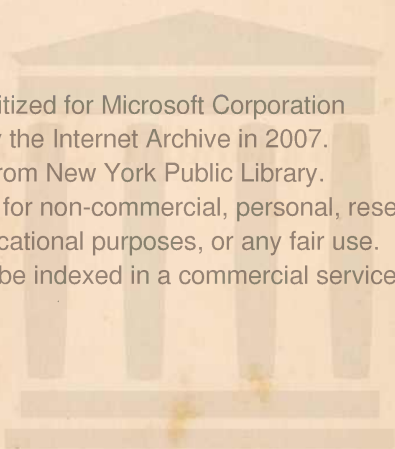
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Grandfather Merrie.

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Frontispiece.



"The sitting room was invaded by the happy troop, each one eager to tell the news first."

p. 12

114/18

Grandfather Merrie;

OR,

THE COMMAND AND THE PROMISE.

"HONOUR thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon
the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

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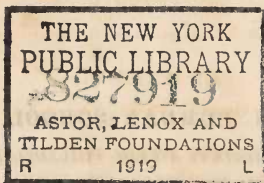
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GRANDFATHER MERRIE;

OR,

THE COMMAND AND THE PROMISE.

CHAPTER I.

GRANDFATHER MERRIE.

IN the pleasant little seaport of Belleville there is one street leading directly from the water.

At the head of this street, on a spot commanding a fine view of the mouth of the river and the broad ocean beyond, John Merrie, the only son of Squire Merrie, (the neighbours used to call the father "Captain Merrie" and the son "Captain John,") had built a pretty house. He had also enclosed the grounds and ornamented them with choice shade and fruit trees. He had been

a sailor from his twelfth year, and now, at forty, had by industry and prudence accumulated a competency for himself and family.

Charlie, the eldest child, was ten years old at the time his father built the new house, and used often to go and see the workmen planing boards, driving nails, and papering and painting the walls.

One day he heard his father say to one of the men, "I wish you to line the walls of this room with brick and take pains to make it very tight and warm."

"Yes, sir," said the workman; "and a nice, pleasant room it will be. Look yonder," he added, as he stood at the open space left for the future window: "there is the brig Maria just coming up to the wharf. You will have a fine view of the shipping, captain."

"This is to be father's room," said Captain John: "I thought it would please him to have his arm-chair by this window, where he can see the water."

"I have bought that open lot below on purpose to prevent any building there, as

that would spoil the view. While father lives I mean it shall be unoccupied.

“Old people have few pleasures, and I know my father would take a great deal of enjoyment in his old age in looking upon the sea.”

Charlie heard this conversation, and, running home as fast as his little feet would carry him, told the children that grandfather and grandmother were to live with them in the new house. There was a general shouting and clapping of hands, and then all ran into the kitchen, where their mother was baking, to tell the good news. The mother smiled as if it was no news to her.

“Ah, mother, you knew it all before!” said Charlie.

“Yes, my children, and your father and I intended to give you a pleasant surprise at the ‘house-warming.’”

“Oh, I don’t like surprises,” said Charlie, with the air of one who felt that he was getting to be a big boy. “I like to know things beforehand and calculate about them.”

"Let us go and tell grandmother," said Mary, who had her cape-bonnet in her hand.

"Grandmother! Grandmother!" said the two-year-old little Johnnie, as he ran to find his cap.

Grandmother lived in the next house; so they had not far to go.

She sat by the side of the open fire, knitting a pair of little mittens, and grandfather was on the opposite side, reading a newspaper, when the noise of the little feet was heard on the kitchen-floor, and the next minute the sitting-room was invaded by the happy troop, each one eager to tell the news first.

"I knew it first," said Charlie; "for I heard father say that grandfather must have the east room, because he could see the vessels there."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Mary, in a lower voice, as she glided gently to her grandfather's side, and jumped upon his knee as if it was her particular resting-place.

"Grandmother! Grandmother!" said Johnnie, throwing up his cap and clapping his hands.

He understood only enough to know that it was something about grandmother and that it pleased the other children, and of course he was delighted.

“Come here, darling,” said the old lady, “and try on your new mittens,” at the same time holding up a very pretty pair, in which red and white were skilfully inter-mixed.

Fanny,—the chubby, round-faced Fanny,—who thought she was getting to be quite a woman because she had seen her fifth birthday, had seated herself in a little chair, and was very gravely looking around the room.

“Grandmother,” said she, after a while, with a very anxious look, “you will want the clock to go too: sha’n’t you?”

“Yes, indeed, I would like to have it.”

“And the high case of drawers, and the round table, and the brass andirons.”

“No, no,” said Mary; “we will need no andirons, for father is going to have a furnace in the cellar to warm the whole house.”

“Little girls always think they know a great deal,” said Charlie. “Now, I am sure

that grandmother's bright andirons will have to go, for there is a large fireplace in the east room. It is the only one in the house."

"But I was wondering," said Fanny, "how we would move these things."

"Easy enough to do that," said Charlie. "Aren't there men and carts enough in the place?"

"Yes, but if they should break the clock. They don't make such now, with a moon going round as it does in the sky, so we can tell in just what quarter it is,—and then a circle with the days of the month, as good as an almanac. I like it better than any other clock."

"I'll warrant the clock will go safe," said Charlie; "so you needn't puzzle your head about it. But you can use your hands when we move, and take some of grandmother's old china. I know of no one else who could be trusted with it."

"Oh, yes! I would like to do that. May I, grandmother? I can take the large china bowl that grandfather brought home—oh—ever so many years ago."

“Yes, Fanny, you shall help me. I’m getting old, and my hands tremble, so that I need some steady arms to handle the old china.”

The day of moving came at last, and, to the delight of the children, they were permitted to take their grandmother’s choice relics in small baskets. The old people did not come themselves until the family were settled and the “east room,” afterwards called grandfather’s room, was made comfortable and warm.

Like others of their age, they preferred the furniture to which they had been accustomed for many years: the same ingrain-carpet, with its small diamond figures, was on the floor; the tall clock, cleaned and varnished, had survived the journey, and, to Fanny’s delight, the round, jolly face of the full moon smiled above the miniature picture of the globe the first evening after they moved. Even the buffet, or corner-cupboard, with its glass doors, stood in the opposite corner from the clock, and, with its fresh coat of paint and new German glass, seemed to laugh outright when the old-

fashioned silver teapot and little china cups, and the great pictured bowl, and the tiny wineglasses, were arranged on the shelves by the careful hands of Fanny.

Grandfather's chair was on the right side of the ample fireplace, and grandmother's on the left, close to a little round table on which she always kept her Bible and knitting-work.

The flitting took place on the day before Thanksgiving, and this pleasant anniversary was made doubly so by the thankful hearts of this happy family. The aged couple, and John Merrie and his wife, acknowledged with humility their dependence upon our Father in heaven. They felt that all their blessings came from him; and grandfather, as he had done for many years on the annual return of Thanksgiving, read that beautiful psalm commencing, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; because his mercy endureth forever!" The ancient Jews used to sing this in the temple on the day of the Feast of Tabernacles, with a full choir, and to the music of stringed instruments.

The Merries had no company to dinner

except their pastor, an aged man, whose wife had gone before him to heaven, and who seemed, with his silvery white hair, meek face and holy temper, to be walking with slow and gentle pace thither.

He was very dear to the family, for he had been with them in sorrow and in joy, and in hours of sickness and death he had been a blessed comforter to lead them from the darkness of the grave to the brightness of a better world. The children all loved Dr. Dane, for, though a man of much learning, he was loving and gentle as a little child.

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CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE NEIGHBOURS THOUGHT OF JOHN
MERRIE.

A FEW rods from John Merrie's house there lived an old shipmate of his, named James Grout.

He too had a family of children, three in number, the eldest a boy very nearly of the same age as Charlie Merrie, and two girls, Susan and Martha, playmates of Fanny Merrie. They, like most neighbours in small towns, had watched the building of the new house and expressed their opinion freely as to its merits and demerits. On the day of the moving, the children had been over to offer their services to the little Merries, and had enjoyed "the fun," as they called it, very much. That evening the family gathered as usual round the kitchen-stove. Mrs. Grout had

a pleasant sitting-room, but she seldom made a fire there in winter, and the children began to relate the adventures of the day.

"Didn't you like that big fire in old Mr. Merrie's room?" said Jemmie to his sisters. "I tell you, mother, if it didn't make the andirons and every thing else in the room shine like a new dollar!"

"Does he keep a fire in there and in the sitting-room too?" said Mrs. Grout.

"Yes, all the time. Charlie says that he is to get up this winter and make the fire in the east room. Catch me doing it without pay!"

"That's just like John Merrie's extravagance," said Mr. Grout; "I guess he'll find his wood-bills will count up before spring. Maple is six dollars a cord, and a fireplace eats it up amazingly fast."

"But," said Martha, "the old gentleman has always been used to an open fire, and don't like stoves or furnaces."

"We can't have all that we like," said her mother.

"Did you see the bathing-room, children?" said their father.

“Oh, yes, and it was so nice! I wanted to stop and take a dive right into the big tub,” said Jemmie.

“I wish you’d like to take a dive into the washbasin at home. It isn’t half the time that you come to the breakfast-table with a clean face,” said his mother.

“It’s a very different thing going into a bath-room with hot and cold water plenty, and clean towels, to what it is coming down in a cold morning to a sink all frozen up and half full of dirty dishes, and a washbasin with a rim of ice round it. If we had a bathing-room I’d like the fun of washing. It’s as good as a swim.”

“We’ll see how John Merrie will swim if he indulges in all these notions,” said James Grout the elder, as he lighted a pipe and leaned his chair back against the wall preparatory to a smoke.

There was one silent listener in the room, —an old man with white hair and bleared watery eyes, who sat behind the stove, gathering himself as close as he could to the fire. He now rose, and, taking some wood from the wood-box, tried to stir up

the coals, for he was shivering from the cold draught of a loose old window near him. His coat was worn and his clothing generally in a forlorn state. His hand trembled, and he dropped the wood, upsetting a pan of potatoes upon the floor.

“Oh, dear me!” said Mrs. Grout; “what makes you try to do any thing about the stove, father? You are always sure to drop every thing you take up. Children, why don’t some of you see to the fire?”

“I believe my rheumatism is getting into my right arm,” said the old man. “It troubles me very much since the cold weather set in.”

“It a’n’t strange,” said his daughter. “Old folks always have it.”

“By-the-way, father,” said her husband, “how old is Squire Merrie?”

“Let me see,” said the old man, bending his head:—“he was fifty-five when he went that last voyage to China. Our vessels met in the Chinese Sea. I was fifty that spring. He is five years older than I am, and I was sixty last month.”

To have seen these two men together, an

observer would have thought the difference in years to have been the other way. Squire Merrie held his head erect, and, though he carried a cane, he had little use for it, as his step was still firm and his health vigorous.

This may have been owing to a naturally fine constitution, and somewhat also to habits of temperance in youth. He had never used ardent spirits, or tobacco in any form. Then he was always cheerful, and enjoyed a pleasant story and a merry laugh as well as any school-boy. There is another thing which I have sometimes thought made him healthier as well as happier in his old age,—his habit of reading and trying every day to add to his stock of knowledge.

He was not a learned man, for he never attended school after he was twelve years old; but he never went to sea without his Bible and a few books in his sea-chest. He was very fond of history and books of travels, and the neighbours used sometimes to call him “the walking geography.” I never heard a doctor’s opinion upon this subject, but my observation leads me to conclude that old people who read and

keep their minds bright are healthier in body than those who do not feed the intellect. There is so close a connection between the body and mind that neglect of one makes the other suffer. Grandfather Merrie liked a good newspaper better than his dinner; and he used to say to his son, "John, as soon as the children are old enough, take a paper that they can read and understand." One seldom called at the Merries' but they saw newspapers on the table, and maps and dictionaries open.

The Grouts thought the Merries were strange people, and never ceased wondering at their odd ways.

When they were fairly settled in the new house, James Grout and his wife went in to make their neighbours a call, and were shown all over the house.

"Well, I never did see the like," said Mrs. Grout to her family at the tea-table. "They haven't any parlour at all! Who would have thought of having a new house without a parlour?"

"How many times in a year do we use our's, Betty?" her husband asked.

“Why, only once or twice. But no matter for that: we have one, and nicer furniture too than any I saw at the Merries’.

“He built his house as large as he could afford, he said, and after giving up the nicest room to his father there was none to spare for a parlour.”

“Sour grapes, I guess, then; for Mrs. Merrie told me that she didn’t want any parlour. They have a kitchen, dining-room, nursery, and sitting-room below, besides the bath-room.

“The furniture of the sitting-room is plain enough, to-be-sure,—a stout ingrain carpet, maple chairs, an old-fashioned round mahogany table, and a sofa. But they have spent enough on pictures and books to have furnished the whole house handsomely. They’re a queer set, I think.”

“It must be that the old Squire has money,” said her husband, “or they would not put themselves out so much. Father,” he asked, (speaking very loud, for old Mr. Gray, Mrs. Grout’s father, was deaf,) “how much is Squire Merrie worth?”

“Not much, not much,” said Grand-

father Gray, as he looked up from his plate and rested his trembling hand on the table. "He lost 'most all his property in the war of 1812,—saved only the old house, and a little money in the Ocean Bank. But you know he taught 'navigation' to boys who were going to be sailors, till within a year or two. Everybody liked Master Merrie; so he earned a little every year for himself and wife."

When Grandfather Gray had said this, he turned again to his plate; but the poor, trembling hand could not hold the knife firmly, and it fell upon his cup of tea, breaking the cup and spilling the contents upon the tablecloth.

"There goes another cup!" said Mrs. Grout, with some anger in her voice. "It does beat all how we break crockery! Pick up the pieces, Martha. You must not try to talk when you are eating, father: it is as much as you can do to get your victuals to your mouth."

"It is hard to do that now with my lame arm," said the old man, as he made two or three ineffectual attempts to rise from the

table, Mrs. Grout not thinking to offer him a fresh cup of tea.

"I can't do it without my cane," he said at last. "Jemmie, will you give it to me?"

"Mary, you get it," said Jemmie: "I haven't finished eating."

"Grandfather asked *you*," said Mary.

"Jemmie, get the cane," said their father, sternly; and the little boy obeyed in a very sullen manner.

Old Mr. Gray's seat, as we have before mentioned, was behind the cooking-stove, a little corner where he was least in the way. His sleeping-room was a small bedroom adjoining, and it was his custom on cold winter evenings to go early to bed.

Mrs. Grout used to say that this was a great convenience to her, "for father was just like a child, and a great deal of care to her."

Some ten years before this time Mr. Gray buried his wife; and, as he was very lonely, he gave up all his property, amounting to four or five thousand dollars, to James Grout, on condition that he should be supported during his life.

His children did not mean to treat him unkindly, but they sometimes forgot that the infirmities of age require much care and gentle treatment from the young and healthy. The children went to Sunday-school with the Merries, and recited with them the Commandments, among which their teacher never omitted the fifth:—"Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." They thought that they kept this command if they simply obeyed their parents; but John Merrie taught his children that the word *honour* meant more than outward obedience. It is love, respect and filial trust.

CHAPTER III.

WINTER EVENINGS AT THE MERRIES'.

THOUGH John Merrie had no parlour, they did have a very pleasant common sitting-room. This room had a southern exposure, and looked out upon the garden from two large windows. The recesses of these windows were so deep that two persons sitting in them seemed quite secluded; and this was a favourite resort for Charlie Merrie when studying his lessons or reading a new book.

Mrs. Grout has already given us a description of the furniture, and we will only add that there were a number of very fine engravings neatly framed, and some tolerably well-executed portraits of Grandfather and Grandmother Merrie, though they would hardly do for a public gallery of paintings. The library was in this room. It was not

large, but was well selected, containing a good many books for reference, as Encyclopedias, a large Concordance, a Classical Dictionary, &c. The large centre-table was always drawn out, and the room looked as if it was used, and could be used without thinking all the time, "I am afraid I shall injure this nice furniture." The furniture was strong, well made, and plain, suitable for everyday wear.

In this room the family always passed their evenings, and it was seldom that any of them were missing except to make a call at grandfather's room. Let us peep in there a minute and see how easy the old folks live. Their fire is very bright, and makes the room almost light enough without the lamp.

The old gentleman is very particular about building his fires, and goes to work with mathematical precision. First comes the round, solid backlog, the backstick on the top of that, and then the forestick on the andirons, and coals and kindlings above. "Give it air beneath," he would say. "Let

the oxygen be the bellows, and you will need none of wood." Grandmother kept the brasses bright and the hearth swept. It was amusing to see how carefully she would watch the apple that the old gentleman used to put down on a little tin plate to roast. He was very fond of an apple cooked in that way after dinner, and his wife took great pains to turn it round and round and take it up before it was burned. There was a picture over the mantle of the old brig "Dolphin," in which Captain Merrie had made so many voyages; and on the mantle was a little wooden vessel all rigged and complete in every part. Around the room were a number of pictures, almost all of them representing scenes at sea. One I remember well in which the wounded Captain Lawrence was lying on deck, seeming to say, "Don't give up the ship." There was a very fine lithograph of Washington, and another of the signers of the Declaration. A thermometer and a barometer hung in the room; but among his treasures there were none that Captain Merrie valued more than a beautiful silver pitcher that

stood in the glass cupboard with this inscription:—

“PRESENTED
TO
CAPTAIN CHARLES MERRIE,
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
BY
HIS MAJESTY WILLIAM IV.,
KING OF GREAT BRITAIN,
FOR HIS GALLANT AND HUMANE CONDUCT IN
RESCUING THE CREW
OF
THE BRITISH VESSEL ‘ORIENT’
FROM THE WRECK DURING A STORM
IN NOVEMBER, 1831.”

Captain Merrie could never tell the story of this rescue without tears. The poor, famished, freezing men, clinging to the wreck, just ready to end life by casting themselves into the sea,—for a vessel in full view of their signals of distress had passed them by an hour before, heedless of their suffering.

“I didn’t need that pitcher,” Captain

Merrie would say, "to repay me for what I did. The gratitude of the poor fellows was enough. Why, the captain, when he saw the last of his crew drawn up, actually threw himself upon my neck and cried like a baby. There is a better reward for a kind deed, even in this world, than silver and gold."

The old gentleman was never tired of talking about the sea, and was as eager to read the ship-news as any merchant who had all his property afloat. Charlie Merrie generally spent an hour in the evening reading to his grandfather, either in the newspaper or some book of travels; and, as the old gentleman had been a great traveller and visited most of the European ports and many in India and China, he would often add his own personal information to the description by the author.

Every new vessel launched from the port was visited by Captain Merrie, who generally took Charlie with him. I do not think that he considered what the effect of this course would be upon a bright imaginative little boy like Charlie, and he

ought to have been neither surprised nor sorry to hear his little grandson say, when he was twelve years old, "Grandfather, next year I am going to sea."

It is true that, with all Captain Merrie's love of the sea, he was sorry to hear this. He knew well all the hardships, privations and dangers of a sailor's life, and he thought, too, of the tender, affectionate mother of the boy, and the anguish she would suffer in having her first-born leading so rough a life at such a tender age.

Grandmother Merrie stopped her knitting and looked earnestly at the little fellow over her spectacles.

"No, no, Charlie, I wouldn't go to sea: it's a hard life. Find some good business on land."

"But grandfather went to sea, and father has been a great deal, and I hope, grandmother, you will not say a word against it to mother, for I know she will feel sorry anyhow. I hoped grandfather would like to have me a sailor."

"Well, well, Charlie," said the old gentleman, "you have a year to think about it."

Perhaps you will alter your mind before the time comes."

"I don't think I shall, grandfather, for I have always wanted to be a sailor."

These words were like a weight on the old lady's heart. She had heard them years and years before, and knew how difficult it was to change such a determination in a boy. She sat looking in the fire and musing. Another bright-eyed little Charlie rose up to view, who, many years before, said those same words as he sat in a little chair at her feet.

He had his wish and was a sailor-boy: but, alas! before he saw his sixteenth birthday he was laid in the sailor's grave, and the poor mother wept for her darling as one who could not be comforted.

"Why, grandfather," said Charlie, after a long pause, during which he too had been looking at the bright coals on the hearth, "didn't you like going to sea? and cannot a sailor be as good a man as a lawyer, or a merchant, or a farmer?"

"Yes, indeed, my boy; but they have great temptations, encounter much hard-

ship and danger, and do not, on an average, live as long as men of the callings you have mentioned."

"But come, Mary," said the old gentleman, who had been watching his wife for a few minutes, "suppose we go into John's room a while this evening?" He knew well what sad thoughts she always had when her darling boy was brought to mind, and he sought to soothe them by leading her to her living children and to the present blessings which God was giving them. Mothers never forget the children that drew their life from them, and whose infancy they watched with so much tenderness.

I sometimes think that if it were possible for boys to look into a mother's heart and have one moment's view of the depth of its love, there would never be another ungrateful son, or a wanderer who neglected his parents in their helpless old age.

CHAPTER IV.

GOING TO SEA.

WHEN Mr. John Merrie heard of Charlie's wish to go to sea, he was sorry that he had not chosen a different life. But he said to his father, "It is of no use to thwart a boy in such a case: all we can do is to fit him for his choice and make him as happy and useful as we can in it." He therefore kept Charlie at a good school and directed him to those studies which would be most useful to him as a sailor. Grandfather Merrie gave him instructions also, and his mother and sister were busy, for months before he went on his first voyage, in filling his sea-chest with little comforts. Captain Merrie would sometimes laugh at them and say, "Charlie is to be a common sailor, girls, and begins 'before the mast:' it will not do for him to have more delicacies and

comforts than his messmates;" and then, turning to Charlie,—

"Don't stay in green water, my boy, longer than the ship does. It's blue enough when you get out of sight of land."

"I'll risk it, grandfather. I can get along if others can!"

"Keep of that mind and you'll get on, Charlie."

Mary and Fanny had very romantic ideas of the sea, and thought that Charlie would surely go to Calcutta or China and bring home a great many pretty things, as nice china, crape shawls, &c., or to Smyrna and other ports of the Mediterranean, where all sorts of choice fruits grew.

Their disappointment was very great when Charlie informed them one evening that he was going with Captain Bray to the Chincha Islands, after guano.

"Oh, Charlie! Now, that is too bad!" exclaimed Mary. "The dirty, ugly stuff! I never would do it in the world! I'm ashamed of you! When anybody asks, 'Miss Mary, where is your brother?' I must answer, 'At Chincha Islands, getting a load of guano.'"

And this, too, when Mr. Montague said he wished you would come and be a clerk in his store! There you could dress well and be a gentleman."

"Ha! ha! ha!"—and Charlie laughed long and heartily. "And so, Mary, you will be ashamed of me in my sailor-rig, loading a vessel with guano? I thought you loved *me* and not my clothes. I'll take care when I come home not to see you till I have been to the barber's shop and taken a cologne bath, and had my hair well cham-pooed and rubbed down with his 'Jessa-mine Hair Tonic.' "

The more thoughtful Fanny, who felt at first as sorry as her sister that her brother had chosen such a voyage, had waited for a second thought:—

"Ay, Charlie, I know why you are going this voyage. It is because Captain Bray is such a good man, and has religious service on board his vessel, and takes so much interest in his sailors, and thinks so highly of grandfather."

"You've hit the mark, Miss Thoughtful," said Charlie. "That is just why I am go-

ing to the Chincha Islands. But then, girls, you don't suppose I can be a sailor and a dandy too, with rings on my pretty white fingers and straps on my toes? No, I am a working-man,—a sailor,—and shall have hard hands and a brown face. All I can promise is that I'll not keep rolling a quid of tobacco in my mouth, nor let wild oaths slip from my tongue, but I shall wear a tarpaulin and a pea-jacket, and talk like a sailor, roll about on land like a sailor, and kiss my sisters like a sailor, giving Mary a pinch on the cheek and a hearty salutation on the lips."

"Captain Merrie" and "Captain John" (as we before said the neighbours distinguished the father and son) were well satisfied with Charlie's choice of his captain and voyage. "It will be hard for the boy," said Charlie's father; "and if it cures him of his wish to be a sailor I shall not be sorry, and, if he can get along with this voyage and be contented, it will serve as an experiment."

Mary insisted upon it that the voyage would be very dull, that Charlie wouldn't have any thing interesting to write, and

that there was nothing to be seen or learned in that part of the world.

That evening the children were in their grandfather's room, talking merrily together around the bright fire.

When lights were brought in, the old gentleman opened a large map, and, spreading it upon the table, asked Mary if she could trace the route of a vessel from Boston to the guano-islands of Peru. She had just commenced—the little finger having gone scarcely an inch—when her grandfather said,—

“Stop a moment, my dear. You are now in the Gulf Stream. Can you tell me any thing about it?”

The little girl stopped, hesitated a little, and then said, “It's a current in the ocean, I believe, grandfather,” and, thinking that she had shown sufficient knowledge of the matter, was proceeding on her route, when she was again stopped:—

“No, my child, not so fast. We will not pass so hastily one of the most wonderful features of the ocean. The hand of our all-wise heavenly Father is as discernible

in this 'current,' as you call it, as in the sun and stars above us. Were it not for this, our globe would not be so agreeable as a residence as it now is for men nor animals."

"How so, grandfather? I do not understand," said Charlie, whose large blue eyes were turned towards his grandfather full of eager interest. "I always had an idea that I should not like the gulf, on account of the terrific storms which happen within it."

"It is true, my boy, that terrible gales sometimes follow its course, owing to the great difference of temperature between this stream and the surrounding water. The maximum temperature of the stream is 86°, while the air on each side of it is sometimes at freezing-point. It is not strange if these two extremes should make some commotion, for there will always be a 'blow' when hot and cold air come in contact.

"But can you not think of any benefit in having such a stream of warm water in the ocean?"

"I think," said Fanny, slowly, "it might warm the rest a little."

"Right, my little girl! It does carry heat to the coldest regions. It runs three thousand miles, carrying with it the warm waters of the tropics, and thus softening the rigors of the Northern Sea, and mitigating the climate of the British Islands, for the West winds that blow over this warm water are very mild."

"But what makes the Gulf Stream, grandfather?" said Charlie.

"I wish I could answer that question satisfactorily to myself, children. There have been various suppositions. Franklin, who studied the matter a great deal, and who was the first that caused this stream to be traced on a chart, thought that the waters which were forced into the Caribbean Sea by the trade-winds, pressed the waters of that sea outward and upward."

"But I don't know what you mean by the trade-winds," said Fanny.

"One thing at a time, daughter," said the old gentleman: "I will explain the trade-winds to you by-and-by. Suffice it to say

now that there are winds that blow in that direction, forcing the colder waters of the Northern Ocean into that sea.

“Lieutenant Maury, whose opinions are of great value, (for he has been a close observer of all the phenomena of the ocean,) states that the waters of the Gulf Stream are much saltier than those of the Baltic and North Seas. Now, if the waters of the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico are very salt, and these northern seas fresh, what would be the result?”

The children looked puzzled, but in a moment Charlie spoke:—

“Why, the salt water would be heavier than the fresh. As the ocean is between these waters, they would seek to equalize themselves there, and a current might thus be formed.”

“Very well, my boy,” said his grandfather; “and, now that you are going to sea, I wish you to learn to observe and then reason from the facts which you collect.

“You will soon push out into this very stream; and no sooner will the vessel enter it than you will feel the change from the

winter air of our coasts to the mildness of a southern climate; and, while you enjoy the change, think of the wisdom of that Providence which has caused this great ocean-river to modify and temper the climates of the earth. There is another thing, children, I can tell you about this Gulf Stream: there are no whales found in it. Can you guess why?"

"Oh, yes, grandfather," said Charlie, "I read that in my book on Polar seas. Whales do not like warm water."

"'Cause they be so fat," said little Johnnie, who sat in his low chair by his grandmother's side and had listened with great interest for many an hour to sea-stories and anecdotes of whales told him by his older brother.

There was a general laugh at the prompt answer of the little fellow, and his grandmother patted him on the head:—"You're a nice little scholar, Johnnie, and will be a minister one of these days."

"And preach on the vessel with Charlie, grandmother?"

"No, no! in a pulpit, darling."

“Why, dear grandmother,” said Fanny, “Jesus Christ preached on a vessel.”

“And some of his disciples were sailors,” said Charlie.

“Well, well, only be like him,” said grandmother, “and I will trust you on land or sea.”

“Well,” said grandfather, “I told you there were no whales in the Gulf Stream. But I will tell you what are found there:—sea-nettles, a sort of small fish which are the principal food of the whale. Large schools of these are sometimes seen on the surface, and are borne from more Southern seas upwards to the Western Islands, where a great many whales are found.”

“So the Gulf Stream feeds the whale,” said Mary. “How good God is to provide meat in due season for all his creatures!”

“Yes, my grand-daughter, and the more we study God’s works the more we are led to admire and praise the goodness which overlooks none, even of the smallest, of his creatures. The great whale and the little sparrow are alike the objects of his love. I wish now, Charlie, you would read

Lieutenant Maury's description of the Gulf Stream,"—handing him a book.

Charlie read as follows:—

"There is a river in the ocean. In the severest droughts it never fails, and in the mightiest floods it never overflows. Its banks and bottom are of cold water, while its current is warm. The Gulf of Mexico is its fountain, and its mouth is in the Arctic seas."

"There, Charlie, is your first lesson in the wonders of the sea,—a mere text, on which you must think much as you trace with your own eyes a part of this current. I might add, in the words of the same author, 'you will then learn that this is one part of the exquisite machinery by which the harmonies of nature are preserved.' But it is time for the little ones to go to bed. Come to my room to-morrow evening, if you like, and Mary may continue to trace the route to Peru."

CHAPTER V.

WONDERS OF THE SEA.

“MOTHER, may I go over to Charlie Merrie’s this evening?” said Jemmie Grout to his mother one day at tea.

“Why do you wish to go there, my child?”

“Charlie says that his grandfather talks to them about the sea, and that the children all go into his room every evening to hear him. They have nice times, I guess.”

“Well, you may go if you wish: but I should think you might hear enough about the sea at home; I am sure your grandfather has been to sea as much as Captain Merrie.”

“How in the world can grandfather tell us stories when it is all such confusion here evenings? If you would only have a good fire in the sitting-room, and give grandfather a nice great easy-chair, and have some maps

and books, perhaps he would teach us a little. I can't see the use of having a house full of nice furniture all shut up in the dark."

"I wonder how long it would be nice if you should be there with your dirty boots, and your father with his pipe, and your grandfather with his tobacco?"

"As to that, the Merries never use tobacco, and don't wear their boots evenings. They all have slippers, from Grandfather Merrie down to Johnnie. Mary Merrie made them, too,—put the soles on and all, with a little help from Charlie. She told me they didn't cost really in money more than a shilling a pair, and they're handsome enough for a prince. I wish our girls would spend some of their time making useful things, instead of drumming day and night on the piano. They are no musicians, and never will be; and yet our piano cost more than all Captain John's books."

"I think it is very strange that Captain John don't buy a piano," said Mrs. Grout. "There's hardly a girl in Belleville that

goes to the seminary but has learned to play, except the Merries."

"I heard Captain John say once that girls couldn't learn every thing. And, as his girls were not musicians naturally, he thought time and money would be better spent on something else: but may I go, mother?"

"Yes, if you wish. I'd rather you would be there than in Pike's grocery, evenings."

"If we had such nice times at home as the Merries have, I shouldn't have any wish to go to the grocery," said Jemmie, as he took his hat and went out.

"Only hear that boy!" said Mrs. Grout, as she busied herself in clearing away the table. "He has no idea how I toil and drudge for my children. Come, girls, wash the dishes, and see if you can't help me after my hard day's work."

"Why, mother, you forget the party at Ann Briggs's. It will take all our time to get ready."

"There is always something to call you away evenings, girls. It does seem as if I had very little help from my children."

"Can you bathe my arm to-night?" said

the old gentleman. "The doctor said it ought to be done every day, and yesterday and the day before it was forgotten."

"There it is again!" said Mrs. Grout: "always something wanted when I'm busiest. Yes, yes, father: you shall be attended to when the girls have gone."

So Mrs. Grout left her other work and helped her daughters to dress for the party, and then, after washing the dishes herself, found time, towards nine o'clock, to bathe and rub her father's lame arm. He had waited very patiently, though in much pain, and when she had finished he felt much easier.

"Thank you: it feels better. If you could only do it for me every day I think it would be well soon. I don't know but it is the air from the window at the right side of my bed that makes me take cold so much. If we could have a double window, like that in Captain Merrie's room, I should sleep much warmer."

"You ought to have one there, father, and I'll speak to Mr. Grout about it; but he is in the house so little lately that I have

hardly any time to see to such things. I wonder if any thing troubles him? He chews tobacco a great deal and seems silent and moody."

"I guess he's troubled about the brig 'Franklin.' She has not been heard from, and was due at Boston ten days ago."

"Did he invest much in her?"

"Yes, a good deal for him,—three thousand dollars, and very little insurance on it."

The old gentleman went to bed, and, as his daughter made him comfortable for the night, a little of the old feeling of affection came over her, and she reproached herself for not being more attentive to the wants of one who had cared so tenderly for her in childhood. The good resolves she made were not put into practice the next day. Her girls were out late, and of course were fretful and insolent, her husband reserved and disturbed by trifles, and the wife and mother did not understand the charm which made the household of the Merries move on with so little friction.

Alas for the world! there is no panacea

for its ills, no charm against trouble, so powerful as firm religious principle.

At "Captain John's" they began the day with prayer, and the four elder members of the family strove to regulate their lives by the precepts of God's word.

They walked before others as in the presence of One who held them responsible for the manner in which they trained the children committed to their care.

It was indeed a great blessing to the young Merries to possess such a treasure as pious, intelligent grandparents. But the respect and reverence of the children arose in a great measure from the example of the parents. At table, not even Johnnie, "the baby," as they called him, was allowed to have his bread and milk till grandmother and grandfather were helped. The warmest seat and the choicest fruits were always offered them, and even the newspaper was carefully dried and warmed and carried to grandfather first. Captain John said that his children were less selfish and more easily managed for having aged people in the house, and he responded most heartily

to little Johnnie, who used often to say, "I so sorry for poor folks that ha'n't any grandfather and grandmother."

But we are staying away too long from the group assembled around the old gentleman.

"Please, grandfather, tell us what makes the trade-winds," said Mary.

"I'll try, my child; and perhaps, if you do not understand it, Jemmie and Charlie here can."

Mary bridled up a little:—"I can understand if Charlie can. I have been as far in geography as he has."

Their grandfather smiled. "Well, Mary, what is wind?"

"Air in motion, my geography says."

"Right, child. But what sets it in motion?"

"I can tell," said Charlie.

"Wait a moment, my boy, and let the girls think it out: Fanny has on her thinking-cap, I see."

Fanny looked as if she was afraid to tell what was inside the thinking-cap.

"Say it out, my dear. What were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking, grandfather,—but I don't know but you'll laugh."

"No, no: say on."

"I was thinking of those hot days last summer, when you used to say that it was getting so hot that we should have a cooler breeze from the sea, and I thought perhaps cold air and hot air might have something to do with winds."

"Quite a philosopher, Fanny. Now, boys, which is the hottest part of the earth?"

"In the equatorial regions," said both of the boys at once.

"What then would follow if the air at the poles is very cold?"

"Why, the cold air from the north and that from the south would both blow towards the equator."

"And what then?"

"They would be heated."

"Yes, and rise up and flow back again as upper currents," said the old gentleman.

"But the trade-winds do not blow north

and south, but are northeast and southwest winds. How can that be?"

Again the children were puzzled,—all but Charlie, who turned to his younger sister:—"Why, Fan, you needn't look so solemn. Does the earth stand still?"

The blue eyes brightened.

"Now I know, grandfather! The earth turns from west to east while the wind is blowing, and that would cause the winds to blow from the northeast and southwest."

"Right again. Charlie, bring the globe here. Put your finger on New York now. Jemmie, bring it under the brazen meridian. Now, Jemmie, turn the globe slowly from west to east; and, Charlie, you move your finger in the mean time down to the equator. There, you see, the spot where your finger now is lies south and west of Madeira. Just so with a particle of air starting from the same spot and going towards the equator."

"Now, how plain that is!" said Jemmie Grout.

"I might tell you much more about the winds, children, but that will do for the

present, as Mary is stopping too long in her voyage to Peru. What else do you see on the chart, Mary?"

"Something which I never saw in my atlas:—Sargasso Sea."

"I'm sure it is not on my maps," said Fanny.

"A sea in the ocean! That's droll," said Jemmie.

"It is a spot in the ocean where, owing to the peculiar whirl of the current, drift-wood and seaweed are accumulated in great quantities, so much as sometimes to impede the motion of a vessel. Columbus noticed this during his first voyage, and thought they might be near land. Well, Mary, you have gone but little ways yet: you are only just opposite the Gulf of Mexico. Soon you will come to the equator. Now, Charlie, look out! as you are a 'green hand,' the sailors may play you a trick. But keep your temper,—keep your temper, my boy. Take things easy as you go through life, and there will be less friction, and you will be happier yourself and make others so around you. Now for the Cape! Look out for storms

about this time, as the almanac-makers used to say. Now you are in the region of the sperm whale, and may see some of these monsters of the deep. Once round the Cape, you will take a northwesterly direction and come into the edge of a desolate region."

"Desolate region, grandfather! Is one part of the ocean more desolate than another, excepting the Arctic seas with their silence and cold?"

"Yes, Mary: there is one spot, southwest of South America, where no fish are found, nor are there any signs of life in the air above or in the waters below.

"Sea-birds will sometimes follow vessels to the edge of this desolate region and then turn back. Even the albatross, that seems to love the silence of the sea, is seldom if ever seen here."

"That is strange," said Fanny. "I wish I knew the cause."

"We are not at the Chincha Islands yet," said grandfather: "to-morrow night we will get there, and I will tell you why Charlie is going there for his cargo."

CHAPTER VI.

DESCRIPTION OF GUANO ISLAND.

It was a cold winter's night. The north-east wind whistled amid the tall masts and rigging of the vessels in the harbour and among the branches of the old elms that stood around the village church, and now and then it whirled the gilt weathercock round and round upon the top of the tall steeple, and played all sorts of antics with the image of Justice on the cupola of the court-house, till the scales she held went to the tune of

“Now we go up, up, up,
Now we go down, down, down.”

Not content with such doings, it went up and down the streets, throwing off hats, and tugging at shawls and cloaks, and whirling the new-fallen snow into the faces of those who were hurrying home to the

shelter of their warm firesides. An arrant rogue is that same northeast wind: he pinches noses and tips them with his red paint, and if he finds a gouty old gentleman abroad he just sticks one of his tiny arrows into an aching foot, or makes a plunge at a rheumatic shoulder, till the poor victim cries for mercy.

The little Merries stood at the window watching his manœuvres, and listening to the ocean as the waves beat angrily upon the beach.

"Oh, grandfather, I am afraid it will be a bad night at sea," said Fanny.

"Yes, my child, for vessels near the coast," said the old gentleman, as he sat with the evening paper in his hand, waiting for the lamps.

"I'm so glad you are not at sea, Charlie," said Mary. "After two weeks have passed away we shall be anxious all the time. I wonder if we shall sleep such nights as these?"

"I wish the wind would never blow hard," said Fanny, "but be just as mild and still as it was yesterday."

“Any thing but a calm,” said Charlie.
“Give us a fresh breeze, I say.”

“A fresh breeze in the right direction, I suppose,” said grandfather. “But we were travelling to Peru. If I remember right, Mary, you are almost to the guano islands.”

“Yes, grandfather, not far now from Juan Fernandez.”

“Robinson Crusoe’s island!” said Fanny.
“Do stop there, Charlie, and see if you can find any thing of his hut, and of the notched trees that he called his almanac.”

“And a lump of gold too,” said Mary.

“The cargo that he will bring from the islands north of there will be better than gold,” said their grandfather.

Mary did not reply, but she looked as if she could not think so herself.

“The guano is supposed to be formed of the deposits of wild birds that have made those islands a resort for centuries, and it has proved very valuable in enriching old, worn-out lands in Europe and America. Ah, Mary, you may not think so, but any thing that makes the earth produce more

abundantly and fills the barns of the farmer is better than lumps of gold."

"I wonder," said Fanny, (who had, as usual, some little unsolved puzzle in her head,) "why they go *there* for guano. Birds frequent other islands, I suppose, and there are plenty of islands nearer home."

"A question that deserves answering, my little thinker," said her grandfather. "It is true that there are deposits in other islands, but they become worthless in a moist climate. It is only in rainless regions that guano is valuable."

"Rainless regions!" exclaimed the children. "Don't it rain everywhere sometimes, grandfather?"

"No, indeed; there are places where it never rains. You know already that winds bring us rain."

"Yes, grandfather, I know that when the wind is east and southeast you say, 'It will rain soon;' but the Bible says, 'The north wind driveth away rain.'"

"Both right, Fanny. The north wind to which Solomon referred was a 'dry wind.' It had not moisture enough in it to make

rain. Now, Charlie, turn to the map. There is a southeast wind that blows as an upper current till it reaches the coast of Africa: then it blows across the ocean in an oblique direction. Look now and tell me what country it would touch first."

"Brazil, grandfather."

"Right. Are there any large rivers there?"

"Rio de la Plata and branches of the Amazon," said Fanny, quickly, without consulting the map.

"What sort of a wind would that be which has blown so many miles across the ocean?" said the old gentleman.

"It would be full of vapor, I think," Charlie replied.

"Yes, and it feeds these rivers."

"Now, that is new to me," said Mary. "Is that the way great rivers are made?"

"Yes, my child, the water is conveyed from the ocean by the winds. Not a wind that blows but is of some use and accomplishes some design of our Maker. The more you study the more you will see that

God makes nothing in vain: all his works show his wisdom and love."

"Then, grandfather," said Charlie, whose eyes were still on the map, "if this wind blows northeast, (as I suppose it does,) it will go across the continent till it reaches the Andes."

"Yes, and there all the moisture that is left is extracted from it, because the tops of the mountains are cooler than the winds."

"Then there would be no rain left for Peru and the islands off the coast," said Fanny.

"You have solved your own riddle, my little girl," said Grandfather Merrie.

"Oh, but you helped me."

"Helped you to think, dear. And now you see why the guano of the Peruvian islands is valuable. The climate is very dry, and there is no rain to wash away the salts of the deposits that make it so valuable to the farmer."

"Why, grandfather," said Charlie, "Commodore Perry says that before the introduction of guano into the island of Mauritius the average crop of sugar was from two

thousand to two thousand five hundred pounds per acre: now they raise from six thousand to eight thousand per acre."

"Very well, Charlie: can you tell me now from what countries guano is obtained?"

"The greatest quantities are obtained from South Africa, Chili, Patagonia, Bolivia and Peru. But Peru furnishes more and of a better quality than any other country."

"I knew a man that brought large quantities from Chili, but it proved almost worthless: can you guess why?"

"Because the climate of Chili is moist and subject to frequent rains."

"Well, grandfather," said Mary, "I never thought you could make us interested in a guano-voyage to Peru, but I feel now as if I would like to have Charlie go there, and hope he will give us long letters about his route."

"My dear Mary, there is no part of the world we inhabit but is full of the proofs of God's wisdom and love."

"From Yotlik, the farthest point of civilization as we go towards the North Pole,

to Mount Erebus, within a few degrees of the South Pole, you will find everywhere that God has remembered to provide for the wants of his creatures. The waters of the Arctic seas swarm with large, oily fish, particularly adapted to the wants and appetites of hearty Esquimaux, while the torrid zone is rich in those juicy fruits so grateful to the palates of the more effeminate nations of that climate."

"I mean," said Charlie, "to see a great part of the world if I am a sailor. I shall take one voyage to the North, and another to India."

"Surely, brother," said Fanny, "you would not want to go whaling in the Northern seas?"

"Yes, indeed, I do."

"Oh, Charlie, you make me shiver. And hark now! How the wind blows! And how angry the waves seem as they dash against the beach! It makes my heart beat hard as I listen."

"I'm glad you are not at sea now," said Mary, as the children left their grandfather's room and sought their comfortable beds.

CHAPTER VII.

DEPARTURE OF CHARLIE—JEMMIE GROUT.

As the time drew near for Charlie to leave home, his mother and sisters looked grave and sad, but his father and grandfather were cheerful and more social than usual. The old gentleman walked down to the brig almost every day, and once said to Charlie, "She's so staunch and trim that if I were twenty years younger I should like to see how nicely, by the aid of the new charts, I could take her round the Horn."

This pleased Charlie very much, for to have grandfather praise a vessel was quite a compliment in Belleville. The afternoon before the "Mary Merrie" (for the brig was named for Grandmother Merrie) was to sail, Charlie said to his mother and sisters,—

"Now, if you please, we will walk down to the wharf, and go on board and have our

‘good-by’ there, and to-morrow do not come down. I am afraid the sight of four such sad faces will make a baby of me.”

The day of Charlie’s departure was bright and mild. There was little said at the breakfast-table, and, though Mrs. Merrie had made Charlie’s favourite warm cake, and put almost all the cream into his tumbler of milk, yet nobody could eat much. Grandfather and father talked about the weather, and Captain Bray, and the brig, and seemed very cheerful; but when the old gentleman offered the morning prayer, and prayed that “He who holdeth the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hand,” would watch over the beloved one who was now going from them, his voice trembled, and tears fell upon the hands that rested on the top of his chair. There was a short pause: the mother’s head was bowed lower, and Johnnie left his own little chair and came and kneeled down close to his mother. In a moment, as if the angel Faith had drawn near, the voice of the old man grew strong, and the words of his prayer were eloquent with love and hope, and

were borne up to heaven as on the wings of the waiting angel.

In many a time of danger and storm Charlie remembered that prayer; and, though he could not pray in faith for himself, he thanked God for praying parents. Mothers and fathers, ye who have little ones who look to you for daily bread, do not forget that a far richer legacy than silver and gold for the children who go out from the home of love is the fervent, faithful prayer of Christian hearts.

Learn to pray, if only for the sake of your absent ones.

That evening "Captain John," his wife and the three children gathered as if by one consent around the bright wood-fire in grandfather's room. It was more cheerful than their own apartment. Grandmother with her knitting-work, and Johnnie's curly head resting on her knee, as he sat in his little chair, the old gentleman with his large lamp and the evening paper, and the corner cupboard, with its bright glass and the silver pitcher, reflecting back each ray of light

from lamp and fire, all conspired to drive away sad thoughts.

"Mary, you must be my reader now," said her grandfather, handing her the paper. "Turn to the inside first, my dear: read the telegraphic despatches and foreign news, and then the ship-news.

"One has to learn how to read a newspaper right, my child, for there is a right and a wrong way to almost every thing we do."

While Mary was reading, the uncertain, slow step of old Mr. Gray was heard in the entry. "Captain John" hastened to wait upon him, and Mrs. Merrie put an easy-chair in a warm place by the fire.

He seemed more feeble than usual, and his limbs trembled as he seated himself with great care and laid his lame arm on the side of his chair. Little Fanny took his hat and cloak and cane very respectfully, though she could not help thinking that she liked her own grandfather better, with his smooth, silvery hair, clean white neckcloth and well-brushed coat, than Mr. Gray, with his hair all straggling over his head, his brown coat spotted and greasy

where he had dropped his food, his mouth stained with tobacco, and his poor old gingham neckcloth all in a string.

"They have no grandmother at Grout's," she said to herself. "How sorry I am for old Mr. Gray!"

It was no uncommon thing for the two old sea-captains to spend an evening together; and the children thought that Mr. Gray came to see them because Charlie had gone. He spread out his poor, withered hands to the fire, as if its heat was very grateful to him, and stretched his feet upon the hearth, then wiped his eyes, that were weak and watery, and, turning to the elder Mr. Merrie, said, "We are in trouble over to our house. Jemmie has not been at home to-day, and we are all afraid he has run away."

"I hope not," said Squire Merrie. "Let me see: it was only yesterday that I saw the lad in Lunt's ship-yard. I'm sure it was him, for he asked me where our Charlie was."

"Yes, yes, he was at supper last evening," said Mr. Gray; "but, ever since we

have given up the Franklin, and his father has been so down in the mouth about the loss, Jemmie has been resolved to go to sea. His mother won't hear a word of it, though I tell her it a'n't the worst thing a boy can do. She and the girls are determined that he shall go into a store. I'm afraid now he has taken his own way and gone on board some vessel."

"I think not," said Captain John, "for none have gone out of port since yesterday but the 'Mary Merrie' and two fishing-schooners. I went down the river with Charlie, and James was not with him."

"I'm almost sorry for that," said Mr. Gray. "I was hoping that he might be with Charlie:—better for him than to be at home. We're poor now, Squire. The hard earnings of thirty years have gone down with the Franklin."

"I am sorry Mr. Grout invested so much in her," said Squire Merrie. "She wasn't sea-worthy. But it can't be helped now. Your son-in-law is young and has time to retrieve his bad luck."

"As for Jemmie, he's a smart little fellow,

capable, if he takes the right direction, of making a useful man. Don't worry about him. He'll turn up by to-morrow with some adventure to relate."

Poor old Mr. Gray shook his head. He knew Jemmie's headstrong will, and he feared the worst. Besides, he had missed from his own room a little hoarded sum which he had carefully saved for his own use. It was only three dollars, but he needed it much at this time. He stayed some hours with the Merries. The warmth, the light, the kind sympathy of the family, did him good. "Captain John" went home with him. It was quite a change from the wood-fire and well-lighted room of Grandfather Merrie to the dark, cheerless kitchen of Mrs. Grout. She and her two daughters sat by the cooking-stove, weeping; while Mr. Grout, in sullen silence, was, as usual, leaning his chair against the wall and trying to smoke away trouble, but it was a vain attempt.

As for the Merries, their sympathy in the trials and misfortunes of their neighbours did them good, for they thought it was very

selfish to mourn Charlie's absence when others were suffering from greater trials.

At that very time the brig "Mary Merrie" was entering Boston harbour, and, a few minutes before she came to the wharf, James Grout was found on board, concealed in the hold. He was determined to go to sea, and, unable to get the consent of his mother, he had hid away, hoping that Charlie would persuade the captain to let him remain.

But Captain Bray was very firm. He had shipped all the hands he needed. It was a picked crew, and he would not encourage a boy in disobedience to parents. So he gave Jemmie a dollar to pay for his lodging, and, as he stayed to take in freight, he told Charlie to drop a line to Belleville, informing Mr. Grout where his son could be found.

It was of no use, however; for, when they went to the boarding-house where he had passed the night, he was not to be found, and after many weeks of anxiety and fruitless search they came to the conclusion that he had shipped as a sailor on board some vessel.

“Troubles seldom come singly” is an old saying, and it seemed verified in the case of the Grout family. The loss of property discouraged them and for a while prevented their exerting themselves to retrieve their losses. They had to part with their large house and rent a smaller one, and the mother and sisters stayed away from church and Sunday-school because they could not dress so gayly as they wished. Mr. Gray was a professing Christian, and when he first went to live with his daughter asked permission to erect a family altar. It was granted him for a while, but the family soon grew tired of it, and when the old gentleman urged the duty upon his daughter she replied,—

“It’s of no sort of use, father. My husband says he has no time, the children are never willing to attend, and it will only be a mockery after all.” Poor Mr. Gray sighed, but said no more about it.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISAPPEARANCE OF OLD MR. GRAY.

"It's no sort of use trying to do any thing: if a man is going down-hill, everybody stands ready to give him a kick," said Mr. Grout, as he came into the kitchen one day at noon and threw his hat into one chair and himself into another.

"What has happened now?" said his wife, looking up from the loaf of bread she was cutting.

"Oh, nothing but what I've been expecting for some time. My store and goods have gone into the hands of my creditors, and I'm a ruined man!" As he said this, he threw himself back in his usual position against the wall and maintained a dogged, despairing silence.

His daughters, who were engaged in some kind of fancy work, looked at their

mother and saw that tears were upon her cheeks.

"I declare it's too bad," said Susan, "that father should be so unfortunate, and that 'Captain John,' who keeps just such a store as father, should be so prosperous."

"They are not so very prosperous," said her mother, "for I heard Mrs. Merrie say to-day that the times were hard and they had to practise economy. She and the girls do all their own housework, make and trim their bonnets, and Grandfather Merrie gives them daily lessons, to save the expense of going to the academy."

"All fudge!" said Mr. Grout, "for I saw him, with my own eyes, this very morning, give fifty dollars to the collector for the support of the minister; and it wasn't an hour afterwards he gave five dollars for a Sunday-school library. It's all luck, I tell you again, and I'm one of the unlucky ones, and might as well give up trying to do any business."

"Dinner is ready," said Mrs. Grout. "Girls, call your grandfather." The old man was in the door-yard, trying to split

some firewood. He did all he could to make himself useful, but it was very little he could do ; and sometimes he wished that the time might come when he should go to his long home, for he felt that he was a burden to the family.

The girls were seldom willing to wait upon him, and never offered to mend his stockings, bathe his lame arms and feet, or wipe the spots from his coat. Their mother received so little help from them about the house, that she had not much time to sew or mend for her father, and the neighbours felt a great deal of compassion for the old man when they saw him tottering about in his ragged overcoat and worn hat.

Mr. Grout was out of business a while, and at last, finding that his family must starve without some exertion on his part, he set up a little grocery on the corner of the street, and there, while selling tobacco and cigars to the men, and candy, tamarinds and pickled limes to the school-children, he could indulge his own taste for lounging and smoking. Old Mr. Gray aided him in the shop, and seemed for a while happy,

because he thought himself useful. Martha and Susan used to sit at home, and fancy that Jemmie would return some day with a mint of money from India or California, and that they would outshine all their neighbours. But months, and even a year, passed, and no tidings came of the lost boy, and the sisters, driven at last by necessity, went into the factory.

Here they might have been respectable and happy; but the same false pride which prevented them being so at home attended them here. They went to church only occasionally, when they had fine clothes to wear, thought themselves too old to go to Sunday-school, and read only such books as afforded them amusement,—the silly novels which some of their companions lent them.

One day in spring, when the first warm weather came, old Mr. Gray, who loved the sunshine, told his daughter that he was going to take a long walk to the ship-yard and would not return for some hours. When there, he met Squire Merrie, who had also been tempted to a ramble by the pleasant

weather, or rather, I should say, to a ride, for an easy old-fashioned chaise was fastened near the ship-yard. The two old sailors rambled about, forgetting age and infirmities as they talked over their old voyages, and sat down on a pile of ship-timber to watch the launching of a pretty little schooner. It is a fine sight to any one, and especially so to an old sailor, to see a vessel slide away into the water as if it were itself alive and longed to dance upon the bright waters of the sea. Squire Merrie was more jovial than usual, and his companion had not been so cheerful for many months. They rode home together; and Mr. Gray, as a consequence, came much sooner than his daughter expected him.

The captain of the new schooner had invited the two old gentlemen to a lunch; so, not needing any supper, and feeling tired, he went to bed in his little room, which adjoined the kitchen.

The family were out; but Mr. Gray was not asleep when they returned and sat down to supper.

“I should think it was time for father to

come," said Mrs. Grout: "it is a long walk to the ship-yard. Perhaps, husband, you had better go and meet him."

"No need of that. He'll find his way home, I warrant. I don't know why he should be so very tired. He has nothing to do but to take care of himself."

"I don't see what old people want to live for," said Martha. "I shouldn't, if I was as old as grandfather."

"Well, he does live," said her mother, "and must be taken care of. You've no idea, girls,—you nor your father either,—how much work it is for me."

"It is only two or three weeks since, when he was not well, that I had made a fire in his bedroom, and left him, as I supposed, very safe in bed. Some hours after I went in for some clothes to wash, and found him lying on the floor, unable to get up, the stove-door open, and his calico bedgown in a blaze. A moment more and I should have been too late. I live in constant fear of accidents."

"I have been thinking," said the husband, "about applying to the town for some

assistance in taking care of your father. He's likely to live many years for what I see, and it will be more and more work every year."

"Why, husband, what will people say? When we were married father gave you all his property. The income of it was enough to support him. People will think it very strange if we turn him off now in his old age."

"*What will people think?*" Alas for the affection of a child when this motive alone would deter her from turning a helpless father from her own fireside!

"I can't help what people will think," said Mr. Grout. "The fact is, the money is gone and I can't help it. This fall I shall move West with my family, and if you want to take the old man along you may, but you must take the charge of him if you do. For my part, I think he'll be far better off in the poor-house."

"At any rate, we'll wait till fall," said his wife.

Poor old Mr. Gray! He had heard it all. He had borne neglect and rags without

complaint, but this last blow was too much. The iron entered into his soul. He went about for some days like one whose mind wandered. His head was bowed, and many times a day he had to stop to wipe the tears that blinded his eyes. His daughter was kinder than usual, but it did not cheer him, for he felt it was only a prelude to the heavy blow that was coming. One day he was observed in the shop writing a letter at the counter. It took him a long while; but it was done at last, and he carried it himself to the post-office.

The postmaster remembered the incident, and noticed that it was directed to an aged brother of Mr. Gray who lived in the western part of the State.

Some months after this, during one of the fine days in September, Mr. Gray was missing.

The neighbourhood was searched and the wharves; the pond was dragged, and advertisements were put in the papers, and every thing that was in the power of the neighbours (for they all loved the poor, inoffensive old man) was done for his recovery.

The postmaster suggested that he had gone to see the brother to whom he had written the letter. But the stage-driver said that he should have known if Mr. Gray had been a passenger, and his coach was the only one that went West. Mr. Grout knew that his father had not the means to pay his fare.

Among all those who were anxious for the safety of Mr. Gray, one heart only suffered the keen pangs of self-reproach.

His daughter suspected that he had overheard their plans for sending him from them. She had noticed his sadness and the silent tears that fell upon his withered cheeks. She could not mention the subject to him, and went on in her preparations for going West. Mr. Gray was much attached to his daughter: she was the only surviving child of a large family, and there were times, amid all the hardness and poverty of their present life, when her affection returned, and she would nurse him with all the tenderness of a loving child.

It was hard for him to think of being separated from the only tie that bound him

to earth. But as the autumn drew near, and he felt that he must become a pauper, he wrote to an only brother whom he had not seen for many years, and asked for a home, or rather—as he did not wish to have his letter answered, lest his plans should be overruled—he said that he would visit him in the fall.

This brother, waiting in vain to welcome Mr. Gray, came at last in person to Belleville to offer him a pleasant home for life in his own family. It was too late, for no traces could be found of the lost brother.

CHAPTER IX.

HOME JOYS.

It was quite a disappointment to all the members of the Merrie family that they received very few letters from Charlie. He wrote to them at Boston, giving an account of his parting with Jemmie Grout, and another from San Francisco, at which place the "Mary Merrie" stopped for a short time. The vessel was spoken once at sea, and Grandfather Merrie read it to the children from the Boston Journal:—"Brig Mary Merrie put into San Francisco for water. All hands well."

As the time drew near when she was expected home, there was great anxiety in the family, every time the mail came in, to know if there was a letter from Boston.

Now, Grandfather Merrie went to the post-office every day. It was his regular

after-breakfast walk; and it would have been quite as strange an event to have the mail fail, as for the broad-brimmed hat, gold-headed cane and "Boston wrapper" of old Captain Merrie to be missing in the post-office at nine o'clock A.M.

One day he was going slowly home, rather disappointed,—for there had been a strong east wind for three days, and he was almost sure that the brig would make Boston Harbour that week.

"I wonder what's the matter," he was saying to himself. "That brig is a fast sailer, and Captain Bray is not a man to be behind time." He was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not hear a quick step close behind him, nor notice that any one was near, till a short, thick-set man, with a bronzed but pleasant face, accosted him:—

"Good-morning, Captain Merrie. I was just hurrying up to your house to let you know that we were in. I'm glad to save time by meeting you."

"My stars, Captain Bray! is that you? I was just saying to myself that you are not

the man to be behind time; but I thought to spy you out with my spy-glass before meeting you on Main Street. Where's my boy?"

"Safe on board the brig at Long Wharf, in Boston. We got in last night, and I came on this morning to attend to a little business. We will be round here to-morrow, when you will find Charlie hale and hearty, and none the worse for a voyage to the Chincha Islands. He's the right stuff for a sailor."

"Ay, ay, captain, it runs in the blood. Have you seen John?"

"No, and shall have no time: I go to Boston in the twelve-o'clock train."

"All right: don't try to see him. I shall have a nice dessert for our dinner to-day."

"Grandmother, was there any letter from Charlie to-day?" asked the children as they returned from school and ran directly to her room.

"No, my dears, but grandfather says he's sure there will be one to-morrow. I thought

he would be quite sad to-day if he came home without one, but he's lively as a boy. There he is now singing, as sure as the world!"

"Oh, grandfather," said little Johnnie, "aren't you sorry there's no letter to-day?" And the little fellow burst into tears.

"Oh, Johnnie, stop that; be a brave boy: grandfather is sure there'll be a big letter to-morrow. Why don't the dinner-bell ring? Run, and tell mother that grandfather is so hungry he can't wait much longer."

It was an odd message to carry; for grandfather was usually very patient, and dinner was forthcoming very soon.

Grace was said, and Captain John began to carve, when grandfather could keep his secret no longer:—

"Johnnie, if you'll guess who I met on State Street to-day I'll give you a dollar."

"It wasn't Charlie, grandfather, because he'd be here if it was."

"No; but it was somebody that had seen Charlie very lately."

Captain John dropped his knife and looked

at his father. There was certainly pleasant news in that broad happy face.

“Was it the captain that spoke with him on the sea?”

“No, indeed, child: he was bound to the Sandwich Islands. But I’ll not keep you in suspense. It was Captain Bray himself!”

“Captain Bray!” they exclaimed, all together. “But why didn’t he bring Charlie?”

“Oh, Charlie is at Boston with the vessel; and a right good sailor he makes, the captain says. They’ll be at our wharf tomorrow.”

The children laughed and chatted, and could hardly eat for joy. Mrs. Merrie was silent, but there were tears in her eyes,—tears of joy for the safe return of her first-born.

That was a busy household for the next twenty-four hours. Charlie’s room was made ready and fresh flowers placed in vases on his table. Mother and the girls baked cake and pies enough to last some days, so that they could have time to talk with Charlie. Grandmother pared the

apples and stoned the raisins, and grandfather collected all the late papers on his table, and the next morning he told Johnnie to get a dish with red apples to place near them.

At twelve o'clock the next day they saw the brig entering the mouth of the river. Captain John and grandfather were at the wharf when she came up, but Charlie could only respond a few words to their welcome.

He must work a while,—would be up to dinner in an hour. Grandfather did not complain of being hungry, though dinner was two hours later than usual.

Captain John and Charlie came at last, with Johnnie by his brother's side.

Grandfather and grandmother received the first kiss and the first warm pressure of the hand; (it was the old habit of childhood retained;) mother next,—but the only word spoken was “My son,”—as the manly boy kissed the soft cheek of the one dearer than all else.

“Ah, Mary, I forgot to stop at the barber's and get my hair champooed and per-

fumed. Can you kiss your brother in his sailor-jacket?"

"But you needn't wear the jacket, Charlie. Mammy has made you a nice dressing-gown. It's all ready for you now," said Johnnie.

"You're a little tell-tale," said Fanny. "Come, Charlie, to your room, and get ready for dinner."

It is needless to describe the pleasant days of Charlie's short stay at home,—the rides and walks by day, and the long social evenings in grandfather's room.

But Charlie was now determined to be a sailor; and, as Captain Bray was soon going on a European voyage, he resolved to go with him.

"Well, Charlie, you are going on my old track," said his grandfather. "You go from Liverpool to Sicily. I have been fourteen times to the latter place."

"Why, grandfather, the famous volcano, Mount Etna, is there!" said Fanny.

"Yes, Fanny, and I visited it soon after the eruption of 1819. I had no idea before of the size of the mountain. It is one

hundred and eighty miles round it, and there are many villages on its sides. It is said the lava makes it more fruitful; and I think it must be so, for I never saw vegetation more rank and luxurious than there. Our nicest figs and fruits come from this island. I saw one chestnut-tree so large that a hundred horses might be sheltered from the sun beneath its branches."

Charlie asked his grandfather if he would tell them how many voyages he had been and all the different places he had visited.

"Yes, my boy, I will do so with pleasure; and if the rest of the children would like to hear it you can all come into my room to-morrow evening, and we will have our maps open, and I will give you a little sketch of an old sailor's life."

"May I sit up all the evening to hear?" said Johnnie.

"Yes, if you can keep awake," said his mother.

CHAPTER X.

GRANDFATHER MERRIE'S LIFE AT SEA.

It was early candlelight when the children assembled, all eager to hear their grandfather tell about his ocean-life. If I were skilful with the pencil, I would sketch the group in that cheerful room. The fire is burning on the hearth and the large brass andirons shine brightly. Grandmother in her muslin cap with her own hair looking none the worse for its silvery threads. It is smoothly parted on a forehead not much wrinkled yet, for the placid temper of Mrs. Merrie shows itself in her face.

A muslin handkerchief of snowy whiteness is folded across her bosom, and contrasts well with the black folds of her silk dress.

This dress is a New Year's present from Charlie, and she wears it for his sake. She

has put on a large full apron, because her pet Johnnie is sometimes drowsy in the evening, and his curly head is apt to fall into his grandmother's lap. He sits by her side now with his large blue eyes wide open. He is sure he will not be sleepy this evening. Grandfather Merrie sits opposite his wife, but near the round table, on which maps and books are scattered.

Charlie, with his sister Mary, is looking out some places on the map. Her fair blooming face makes a pretty contrast to the brown manly countenance of her brother.

Fanny—the gentle, pale-faced Fanny—is close to her grandfather. There seems to be a mutual sympathy between these two; for, though the old gentleman has no favourites, yet the careful, motherly Fanny is always near to get his cane, find his hat, bring him the newspaper and warm his slippers. She takes to housekeeping as naturally as a bird to making a nest, and likes to take care of others as much as this same bird to watch over its fledglings.

The old gentleman had been looking in

the fire and musing. Suddenly, as he looked round the room, his eyes resting lovingly on the group, a shade of sadness gathered on his face.

“Ah, my children, your grandfather had no such pleasant childhood as this. I was a baby in my mother’s arms when my father—a common sailor—went on board a vessel one afternoon bound on a voyage to India. There was a terrible gale that very night, and neither ship, officers nor crew have been heard from since. They went down in sight of the homes they had left only a few hours before.

“My poor mother worked hard to support herself and child; but her sorrow and labour soon brought her to the grave.

“A kind sailor, a shipmate of my father, took me to his own home; but my life was rather a rough one, and as to schooling, all the education I received was two or three quarters at a district school.

“I was fourteen years old when, one pleasant June, I found myself on India wharf, in Boston, engaged to go, as sailor before the mast, on a voyage to Liverpool.

I rose gradually till I became captain, passing through all the grades of my profession. So, Charlie, I think I know what it is to be a sailor.

"I was at sea forty years, thirty-one of which I was master of a vessel. I sailed twenty-six years for ship-owners who had their counting-rooms on India wharf, and twenty-three years in four vessels."

"Why, grandfather," said Fanny, "how many storms you must have seen! Were you never east away in all that time?"

"My dear child, every time I think of my sailor-life I say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' During all that time I never had a man buried at sea, never was in a vessel which sprung a leak, and never had a ship's crew upon allowance of water. I have been in and out of Boston Bay for twenty-five winters, but never had a man frost-bitten."

"I guess you were good to the sailors," said Johnnie.

"I had two men run away once: that was all in the forty years. Now open the map, children, and I'll tell you the extent of my

wanderings:—Liverpool, Malta twice, Gibraltar twice, St. Helena, Marseilles, Cronstadt, Riga, Archangel, Constantinople, Smyrna, Naples twice, Genoa twice, Trieste twice, Messina twice, Palermo twice, Marsala twice, Trapani twice, Malaga twice. But I shall weary your patience with my list: there it is written down,—twenty-eight ports, besides those mentioned. Besides these, I have been fifty-two voyages to Cuba, and fourteen, as I told you, to Sicily, and frequently to the larger ports on our own coast.”

“But, grandfather,” said Charlie, “if you have been so many voyages to the West Indies you must know something of the terrible storms of the Gulf Stream.”

“Ay, Charlie, I shall never forget one night on board ship,—the night of October 11, 1846. There was a terrible hurricane which destroyed Key West and washed down Sand Key light-house. I was at anchor at the Bahama banks in four fathoms of water. I saved my vessel by sending down all my yards and housing my topmasts.

"On the 4th of September, 1842, I was in the vicinity of Moro Castle in a hurricane. This time I gave up all for lost: I saw no hope. Suddenly the wind shifted, and we were saved."

"You were a fortunate captain, grandfather."

"Yes; it has always seemed to me that God took the poor orphan under his protection. But then, Charlie, I understood my business, and I knew what it was to be cabin-boy and first officer. There have been great improvements in vessels since I first went to sea. I remember when there were but two barks belonging to Boston. I have crossed the Atlantic sixty-eight times, the equator twenty-two times, and have passed Cape Florida sixty-five times, bound north."

"And here you are now, grandfather, safe at last," said little Fanny, her eyes filling with tears and her hand resting on his knee.

"Yes, yes; and a pleasant spot it is for an old hulk to be drawn up in. I feel sometimes as if I had stayed here long enough

and want to be refitted for my last, long voyage to the New Jerusalem."

"Husband, will you tell Charlie how badly you felt once when you came into Portland from Cuba?"

"Ah," said the old gentleman, "you will never forget that: I believe my very misfortune pleased you more than the Canton crape shawl I brought home for you."

"Not your misfortune,—your honesty."

The curiosity of the children was of course excited to know what this meant.

"Why, you see," said the old gentleman, "somehow or other, I never could tell a lie. It always stuck in my throat, and never would come up."

"It's just so with me," said Fanny: "I never can get it out."

"When the cholera prevailed in Boston there was a long quarantine imposed in Cuba upon all vessels from Boston. Now, this was expensive and inconvenient, so that merchants were in the habit of sending their vessels round to Portland, to clear there and obtain a clean bill of health, to avoid this quarantine. The owners of my

vessel did so; but when I arrived in Cuba I was questioned by the authorities whether my cargo was taken in at Portland or Boston. Now, I knew if I told the truth it might be a pecuniary injury to my employers. Other captains in port, situated as I was, swore their cargoes through as well as their vessels. It seemed a mere form, as there was no danger from cholera; but I could not take that false oath, and preferred to suffer the consequences."

"But did not your employers like you all the better for that, grandfather?" said Mary.

"No, they did not. We must not do right, looking for immediate reward from our fellow-men. I had the approbation of my own conscience; but I lost my situation, and that was what your grandmother meant. I felt badly to be out of employment a month."

"You did not suffer in the end, husband."

"Not at all,—not at all."

"There is one thing more you must tell the children,—that you always took Bibles to sea with you."

"Yes, indeed. I have been well supplied

by the Bible Society, and am happy to tell you that I have distributed the word of God in eight different languages."

"I often think," said Mrs. Merrie, "that sailors would make good missionaries.

"They might do more good in some places than regular religious teachers. I want sailors to be Christians, for they go into all the world and might carry the gospel to all nations."

Charlie looked grave and thoughtful while his grandmother was talking. He knew full well that, though he was a beloved son and kind brother, he yet lacked the one thing needful. There had been times in the lonely night-watches, with the bright stars above him and the ocean all around him, that he had wished he had the hope of his father and grandfather; but he had not sought with all his heart for the pearl of great price.

The evening had passed pleasantly away, and the children went to their beds, all thankful, as little Johnnie expressed it, that they had the "goodest grandfather and grandmother in all the world."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANCIENT GRAVEYARD—SAD DISCOVERY.

I COULD not in this little book give an account of all Charlie's voyages, for he was now determined to follow the sea till he had made money enough to stay at home.

For five years he made regular trips to the West Indies; and, as these voyages were short, he was often at home.

During one of these vacations (it was about two years after his first voyage) he took a long ramble, on a pleasant summer's day, with his sisters. They carried their dinner with them, and were to have a little picnic on the grass. Their father and mother had promised to ride out before sunset and spend a little while with them.

Charlie loved the sea, but he loved the green woods too, and had explored all the lanes and by-paths about his home.

The road they took at this time was a

favourite walk of his, for it ran past an ancient burying-ground where he often stopped to read the quaint inscriptions on the half-sunken grave-stones. It was a green and quiet spot,—this old home of the dead,—and the children rambled there for an hour or two.

“Now let us read the good wife,” said Mary, as she stooped down and brushed the tall rank grass from the dark stone!—

TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MRS. JUDITH,

THE LATE VIRTUOUS WIFE OF DEACON COFFIN,
WHO, HAVING LIVED TO SEE 177 OF HER
CHILDREN AND CHILDREN’S CHILDREN TO
THE THIRD GENERATION, DIED 1705, AGED
80 YEARS.

“Grave, sober, faithful, fruitful vine was she;
A rare example of pure piety.
Widow’d a while, she wayted wisht-for rest
With her dear husband in her Saviour’s breast.”

“And here’s the man who had the asthma,” said Fanny.

“For near ten years
This man an asthma had,
Above ten years he was not in a bed;
He to murmur was never heard by one,
But waited patiently
Till his change did come.”

“And here’s good Timothy,” said Johnnie. “I always read this one:—Mr. Timothy Noyes.”

“Good Timothy in
His youthful days,
He leaned much
Unto God’s ways.
When age came one
He and his wife
They lived a holy
And a pious life.
Therefor you children
Whose names are Noyes,
Make Jesus Christ
Your only choice.”

“I guess they didn’t study their spelling-lessons,” said Johnnie.

“They did not have our spelling-book in those days,” said Mary.

From the graves they went to the floating island, which is near the burying-ground in what is called the Meeting-House Pond.

This island contains about half an acre of land, which rises and falls with the water! The water is sometimes eight feet higher than at other seasons, and when it is a very dry season the island is lower than the main land.

There are six large trees on the island. "I call this the 'Sailor's Island,'" said Charlie.

"Be quiet, Charlie: don't you see the moor-hens are there?"

"I want to see them! I want to see them!" said Johnnie.

"There they are," said Charlie, "with their brood of little ones."

"Isn't it strange?" said Mary: "grandfather says that for more than a hundred years a pair of these birds have come to this island about the 10th of May, and left with their brood in the fall?"

"You don't mean that the same birds have lived a hundred summers in this spot?" said Fanny.

"I don't know the age of this kind of hen," said Charlie, laughing; "but, if they are the descendants of the original pair that

first discovered this snug retreat, they must have some way of communicating to each other their right of possession. At any rate, no sportsman would kill these birds, any more than a sailor would shoot an albatross."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Fanny.

"Sailors have an idea," said Charlie, "that shooting birds will bring bad luck to them, and an albatross is held in special veneration,—perhaps from being rare and not often seen out of certain latitudes."

From the island the children turned into a shaded lane, leading to a lonely and wild-looking spot where, some hundred and fifty years before, the people had blown out the rocks for limestone. One spot, from its rugged, strange appearance, was called "The Devil's Den," and a well-worn path led to it.

Fanny said she did not like to visit a place with such a name, but Johnnie said that he wasn't afraid to go with Charlie, because Charlie had been there so many times. Here Mary and Fanny sat down to

rest, while the two brothers went in search of wild flowers and berries.

Suddenly Charlie came to a halt beside the trunk of an old tree.

An old-fashioned ivory-headed cane was leaning against it: he knew the cane at once, and remembered it as one that his grandfather used to carry years ago, before Mr. Simpson, the owner of the "Dolphin," made him a present of the gold-headed one which he now carried.

Near the cane, upon the ground, was a pile of bones. A moment's inspection convinced Charlie that they were human bones! The skull was perfect; but there were only deep hollows where the eyes once were, and the gaping, fleshless mouth showed but two or three teeth in the bleached jaw-bones. He turned pale, and a sudden sickness and dizziness came over him as he stood and gazed upon them.

"What is it?" said Johnnie, not a little startled at the expression of his brother's face.

"I don't know, Johnnie: it is very strange;" and he took the cane in his hand.

On a little silver plate were the names,
"J. MERRIE TO D. GRAY."

"Oh, Johnnie! Johnnie! these are the bones of poor old Mr. Gray! It was here he wandered when they searched for him so long. Poor man! He must have fallen down here in a fit, or perished with the cold."

The boys called their sisters, and the children with sad hearts stood around these poor relics of their old friend and neighbour. They remembered the long, anxious search of the neighbours, and their own fears that he had met some sad and lingering death. It was a fearful sight, and there was no more play for them that day; but Fanny and her youngest brother went onward to meet their parents, who were now expected every minute, while Charlie and Mary watched by the old tree.

Mr. Merrie examined the remains and was convinced that Mr. Gray had died there. Beside the bones, upon the ground, half covered with grass and dead leaves, was a small bundle. It was mouldy, and so decayed that nothing could be identified but

an old silk handkerchief which had Mr. Gray's name marked in the corner.

The family had no appetite for their picnic that day, but hastened to the town to inform James Grout of the discovery of the remains, that he might have them decently buried.

I am sorry to say that since the disappearance of Mr. Gray matters had gone on from bad to worse with the family. The girls had not learned to respect their parents in childhood, and as they grew older they found all restraint irksome. Martha was married to a young man who had been employed in a travelling circus, and her mother said that her home was in Boston, and that Jane lived with her. But they never visited their parents, who, having given up all idea of moving West, settled down into dull—almost hopeless—poverty.

They lived in a room back of the grocery, which had become a mere rum-selling, vicious haunt. Mr. Grout had probably indulged too freely in liquor that day, or he would have paid a little more respect to his father's memory.

As Grandfather Merrie was sitting by the large deep window in his room near tea-time that afternoon, he saw James Grout pass through the street, driving a rough-looking one-horse cart, with the bones of Mr. Gray thrown carelessly in on the bottom of the cart, uncovered, and exposed to the gaze of every passer-by!

It was a shameful thing, and the old gentleman was sadly grieved; and, calling to Fanny for his hat and cane, he went hastily out and ordered a neat coffin at the cabinet-shop with a plate for the name and age of his old friend. From thence he went to see Mrs. Grout. The poor woman was weeping sadly; but when she saw Mr. Merrie she wiped her eyes, and exclaimed, "Oh, dear, Mr. Merrie, *what will people say?* Only think of my father dying such a death! You remember him twenty years ago: he was one of the smartest men in Belleville. If he had never given his money to James Grout he would never have come to this."

Poor woman! There was no remorse for her own past neglect, no grief for what her father had suffered, but only mortifica-

tion at "what people would say," and vexation with her husband.

Grandfather Merrie went himself to the graveyard with all that remained of his friend, and caused a neat stone to be erected to his memory. The next Sunday the aged minister, Dr. Dane, preached from this text:—"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Those who remembered Mr. Gray were rejoiced to think of him as one who had found rest in heaven from the trials of earth.

CHAPTER XII.

JOY AND SORROW.

WHEN Johnnie was fourteen years of age he wished to go to sea with his brother, who was at that time captain of a ship that made regular trips from Belleville to Cuba.

Charlie was captain of the vessel before he was twenty years of age. During the first voyage after his promotion, he was walking the deck one fine evening, when the sea was tranquil, and the moon and stars looked quietly down upon the little vessel as she sped over the waves,—not very fast, to-be-sure, for the wind was not very fresh or strong; but her bow pointed homeward, and the thoughts of the young captain flew faster than his white-winged schooner to that pleasant home and the loved ones around the fireside. This voyage had been prosperous: he had sold his cargo to good advantage,

his crew had been obedient and trusty. Every thing conspired to make him cheerful and happy.

All at once this question occurred to him:—"Whence come all my blessings?" "Then," to use his own words, "I thought of God's goodness and kindness to me, and I resolved to give my heart to the Saviour, to serve him faithfully the rest of my days."

He went into the cabin, took down his Bible,—his mother's precious gift,—and read of Him who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life," then kneeled and prayed, not repeating a mere form of prayer as he had often done in his life, but from the heart exclaiming, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

The first evening after his return home, he sought a conversation with his mother. She had always been his confidant in all joys and sorrows. Her heart overflowed with joy to hear him say, "Mother, I feel that I am a sinner: what shall I do to be saved?"

She prayed with him and told him that Christ died for sinners. "Trust in his

merits, my boy, alone for salvation. Give yourself heartily to him, and he will pardon."

She besought him to see their pastor, Dr. Dane. The good old man laid his trembling hand upon his head, and said, "They that seek him early *will* find him." He then explained to him the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and led him, as Evangelist did the pilgrim, into the narrow way and to the wicket-gate.

The next voyage a plain but hard duty lay before him. Could he, as master of a vessel, neglect to let his light shine? Must he not as a consistent Christian try to lead his crew to seek heaven with him? But how could he—a mere boy—read his Bible and pray before these men? They might laugh him to scorn; they might refuse to listen to him. But, seeing his duty, he determined to perform it. He therefore called them all into his cabin at evening for prayers. Every one came willingly; and from that time until he left the sea he prayed with his crew every evening at eight o'clock.

It was not strange that Captain John and

his father gave their consent to Johnnie's going to sea with his brother.

"It will be so pleasant for him," said his mother. "I shall feel almost as safe about him as if he were at home."

They were to be gone but a few weeks, and then the vessel was to go to Havre, and Charlie would remain at home for a month or more.

Johnnie bade good-by to home very cheerfully, and entered upon his duties on shipboard as if he felt that a vessel was to be his home for many years to come.

They had a pleasant passage out, but unfortunately were detained in Havana longer than usual. The sickly season was approaching, and the young captain was anxious to get his vessel away before the yellow fever, that scourge of those pleasant islands, should prevail. He was acclimated himself; but he knew the danger, and warned his crew to be careful and to be guilty of no imprudence.

The day before he was ready to leave, Johnnie was taken ill. He had a strong constitution and a cheerful temperament, so that,

under his brother's careful eye, there seemed no danger. But this dreadful disease often baffles the skill of the wisest, and poor Charles watched his patient with an anxious heart as the fever reached its crisis. He had not long to watch, for it was a violent attack, and the second day the doctor said, "Well, captain, if we can get your brother through one day more he is safe!"

It was well for the young captain in this hour of need that he had a Friend to lean upon who never fails those who trust in him. As Johnnie tossed wildly about, burning with a heat which no ice could cool, and an agonizing pain in the head which no opiate could soothe, his brother prayed most earnestly that the loved one might be saved, that the home for which the sick child longed so much might not be desolate. But God's ways are not our ways; and He who never afflicts willingly knows best when to chasten. On the third day Johnnie, who had fallen into a short, unquiet sleep, awoke with a deep sigh:—"Oh, Charlie! I am so sore and so full of pain! Where is mother? Mother! mother! Why don't

mother come? Call her, Charlie! tell her to come quick."

In a short time his limbs became rigid, and his extremities cold: he did not know his brother, and was delirious. He thought he was at home and very sick, but mother would not come near him.

Charles knew too well that these symptoms were the prelude of death.

The disease was beyond the power of man to heal. Before morning Johnnie's sufferings were ended in death.

It was hard, very hard, for Charles to part with his brother thus. But the saddest scene of all was to come. How could he go home without him?

He knew too well the custom of the island, and the necessity of an early burial in that warm climate, but in his anxiety for his brother he had forgotten it all; but now it seemed that death was doubly bitter, because he must leave Johnnie so far away from the pleasant, shady burying-ground of his own home.

During the voyage home Charles prayed much for submission to God's will. He read

often of the joys of heaven, and blessed God that he had such good evidence that his brother had washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For some years John had given evidence of a change of heart. His grandmother had been aware of his religious feelings, and when the vessel sailed on the day of his departure she had said to Grandfather Merrie, "Husband, if we never see Johnnie on earth again we will meet him in heaven."

Never did Charles feel so sadly at the sight of home. As the vessel neared the port, and the spires of the churches could be seen, he almost wished to slacken the speed that was so swiftly bearing sadness to the hearts he loved.

She entered the river. In all his former voyages, how his heart had bounded within him at the sight of the familiar objects along the shore! Now every tree and house, the rocks, the two tall light-houses, that always seemed in former voyages to smile a welcome as they sent their light onward to show him the safest pathway, all reproached

him now. Alas! poor Charlie! His faith was weak, and he forgot for a while that his father and mother had learned to say, "Thy will, O God, be done."

As the vessel came to the wharf, the first person upon the pier was Grandfather Merrie. He had seen the vessel some hours before with his glass, and had come down to be the first to meet the boys.

"Halloa, Charlie!" he exclaimed, as soon as the plank was thrown down and he could reach the deck. "Where's Johnnie?"

Charles could not speak. He grasped his grandfather's hand and drew him into the cabin.

"I'm so glad you came first, grandfather. I can tell you better than father or mother. You must do that for me."

There was no need to say more. The old sea-captain knew it all.

"Ah, my boy, I feared this. The vessel had not been gone two days before I felt that we had made a mistake in letting the boy go at this time."

They sat silent a few minutes. "Grandfather," said Charles, "I must not see mo-

ther till you have told her the sad news: I cannot be the first to break it to her."

"You need not, Charles. There is your father: I hear his step. I will ride home, —my carriage is at the wharf, —and you two can follow more leisurely."

Charles was surprised, when the first shock was over, to see the calmness and submission of his mother.

It was hard indeed to lose this pet of the household. "But oh, Charlie! how much better to lose him so than to have had him a disobedient, reckless boy and a wanderer from home! We believe he was a child of God, and is now with God in heaven. He is 'our Johnnie' yet, and we hope to go to him, though he cannot come to us."

This spirit pervaded the whole family; and it was pleasant to see how gently they dealt with Charles, who could not help reproaching himself for taking his brother with him. Some of the neighbours wondered that they did not go into deep mourning, and thought it must be parsimony. But they would not have thought so if they had known the Merries better. Johnnie's

bank-stock (for he had accumulated a little fund of his own) was all consecrated to God, given to the "Seaman's Friend Society,"—an object in which the boy had great interest while living.

"I know it will please him now," said his mother, as she handed it to the secretary.

Thus did the Merrie family receive death,—not as a messenger of terror, but as those who love God should always receive it,—God's messenger of mercy to his redeemed children.

CHAPTER XIII.

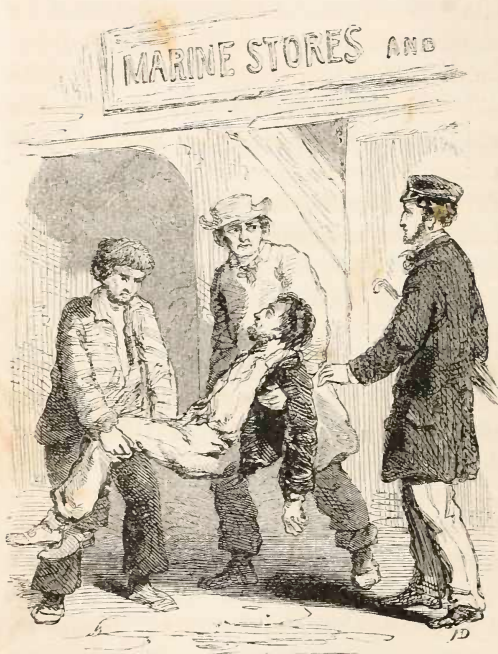
A GLANCE AT JEM GROUT AND HIS SISTERS.

It was more than a year after the events related in our last chapter, that "Captain Charles," being detained with his vessel in Boston some days, resolved to spend the Sabbath in attendance at the Seaman's Chapel. In going there he passed through some of the streets near the water, where there were many low grogeries, and sailors' boarding-houses,—not the most respectable of their class.

Some of these were in cellars and basements, and now and then one was entered only by a trap-door. The inmates were not going to the chapel, though many young girls, and even women, were dressed in tawdry finery and sat by the open doors and even on the sidewalk.

It was no new sight to the young man,

Grandfather Merrle.



"His attention was drawn to two men carrying a sailor, who had
apparently fallen and injured himself." p. 123.

and he was walking rapidly onward, when his attention was arrested by an unusual bustle around one of the doors, caused by two men carrying a sailor who had apparently fallen and injured himself. The blood was streaming from the poor fellow's head; his face was terribly bruised, and one eye very black and swollen.

Captain Charles stopped and inquired of one of the bystanders the cause of the accident.

"Only a drunken row," was the careless answer.

They carried the injured sailor into a cellar, where two young women in gaudy dresses, with gay ribbons in their heads, had, a minute before, been sitting on the sidewalk.

Charles was walking on, thinking it useless to offer assistance, when he heard one of the women say,—

"Yes, bring him in, of course. But, Jem, you might as well be dead as to be forever fighting and getting into trouble."

There was something familiar in the voice, and something, too, in the face of the

sailor, bruised as it was, that determined him to turn back and enter the low, filthy-looking room.

The sailor was now on a low bedstead, calling upon the women to bathe his face and give him something to drink.

"Are you badly hurt?" said Charles. The man opened one eye as he laid his hand upon the other, that was now very purple and swollen, and looked earnestly at the questioner.

"By thunder! if that a'n't Charlie Merrie, then I'm somebody else besides Jem Grout! Girls, come here."

But the sisters had disappeared.

"Yes, it is your old playmate," said Charles. "But I'm sorry to see you here and in such a condition."

"There's no use in trying to make white black," said Jim. "I've been in worse places than this; but d—— I was going to swear; but I suppose that a'n't agreeable."

"Shall I do any thing for you?" said Charles.

"Hang it all, the girls are ashamed to have you see 'em in this hole, and so they

leave me here to die like a dog. If you'll only now bathe my face in something and bandage up this lame arm, I'll be obliged to you. Can you do it for old acquaintance' sake?"

"Oh, yes," said Charles, and he proceeded—and with success, too—to make Jem more comfortable.

"Oh, Charlie!" said he, "it brings back old times to see you. I have never had any happy days since we used to go to school together in the old brick school-house in Federal Street. I have never been home since the day you left me on the wharf at Boston. My poor grandfather is dead. I could never return after I heard of that, for I stole all the money from his purse when I went. I always meant to return it to him fourfold. He was a good man, and if I had listened to him I shouldn't have become such a scape-grace as I am. I don't care now what becomes of me. I'd rather die, only I'm afraid of what comes after death."

"It is never too late to repent," said Charles.

“No, no ! it’s a gone case with me. But I wish my sisters could be induced to return home and live better lives. Do something for them, Charlie ; but as for me, I cannot live without drinking, and it is terrible hard to talk without swearing. I’m over head and ears in debt.”

“Alas !” thought Charlie ; “the way of transgressors is hard.”

He told him of the thief on the cross, of the prayer of the publican, and of the mercy of God, who bids us all come to him and live. He made him promise, too, that when he should recover from his bruises he would go home to his mother, for she had never ceased to mourn for him. After reading the Bible and praying with him, he left, with a promise to call again.

All this time the sisters did not come into the room : they had recognised Charles, and watched from a neighbour’s window his departure from the house. Poor girls ; their case was more desperate than that of their brother.

Charles called again, and found Jem had read his Bible, and was trying to live a

different life. His sisters had ridiculed him, and some of his companions had made fun of the "preaching captain," and in all probability the sailor would have returned to his bad ways if Charles had not settled his debts on condition that he should go home with him the next day. Once in Belleville again, surrounded by those who felt an interest in just such wanderers, he hoped that his reformation might be complete.

How differently the two young men looked as they took their seat side by side in the rail-car! There was not a year's difference in their ages; and yet one was bloated with rum-drinking and haggard with dissipation. His teeth were worn and discoloured by tobacco: he was lame and stiff, not only with the many bruises he had received in street-fights, but with rheumatism and hard labour. He could not converse with gentlemen around him; for, though he had been a great traveller, he had read little, and had taken no pains to inform himself about the countries he had visited. He was an old man at twenty-two. Charles,

on the other hand, was robust and healthy, rather short in stature, and somewhat thick-set, as sailors are apt to be, but with a fresh, open, cheerful countenance, and a pleasant word to all he met. He was a little fond of dress when on shore, and preferred shirts with ruffled bosoms to plain ones. His sisters took great pleasure in making them, and in getting them up to suit brother Charles. His breastpin was a gold anchor, and his watch-chain an imitation of cable. It was not vanity, but a natural desire to please, and a genuine love of the beautiful, for he preferred a rose-bud to a breastpin, and always, in the season of flowers, had some choice one in the button-hole of his vest. There was no end to the choice bulbs and roots he brought home for his sisters.

He was fond of conversation, and, during this very trip of which we speak, he entertained two literary gentlemen with an account of some tropical plants which he had lately brought home from Havana, and gave them a minute description of the climate, soil and productions of the island.

Jem Grout in the mean time sat in a cor-

ner, chewing tobacco, and regretting that he had not improved his opportunities when young. He remembered the evenings at Grandfather Merrie's, and how cheerfully he was always welcomed there; but much of the time he had preferred the bar-room and the grocery to the quiet home and books of his neighbour.

Mrs. Grout was glad to see her son back again, for she had a mother's love; but I am sorry to say that, when Grandfather Merrie called a few days after his return, she said to him, "Oh dear, Mr. Merrie! what will people say to see my poor boy looking so shattered and bad? I'm sure I tried as hard as anybody to make my children respectable."

The old gentleman was quite out of patience with her, and replied,—

"Mrs. Grout, we should not be thinking of *what other people* will say, but try to act always as if God's eye was upon us. It is of more consequence now that Jem should reform thoroughly and become a child of God, than that the whole town should be talking of his fine personal appearance.

“Serve God first; and if we do that with our whole hearts, the approbation of good men will follow.”

It was Jem's wish to be one of Charles's crew for the next voyage.

This was rather hard for Charles to grant. He had been fortunate in his sailors: they were all temperance-men, and some of them were Christians. He did not like to have one whose habits had been so bad: he was afraid of the influence on the younger boys. But Jem made so many promises, and his mother pleaded with tears, that he at last consented. He was going to New Orleans, —from thence to Europe.

The voyage would occupy some three months; and if Jem could quit his bad habits for that time, they hoped much for the future.

The crew were willing to aid the young captain in his efforts to reform poor Jem, and, as he was a good sailor, and always ready to do even more than his share of work, they treated him with great kindness.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORM—THE OLD FARM-HOUSE.

ONE afternoon in October, some months after Charles had left for New Orleans, Grandfather Merrie went as usual to the post-office, hoping to hear news from his grandson. There was no letter, but since the railroad had been built he received the "Boston Journal" daily. Turning immediately to the marine news, he found the following:—"Bark 'Ocean Queen,' Merrie, from Liverpool to Boston, driven upon the beach at Wellfleet, 9th inst., by the storm, and lies broadside to, in a position favourable for launching. She is dismasted and otherwise damaged, but her captain has contracted with a firm in Truro, who are to get her into Provincetown for \$900."

"Poor Charlie! poor Charlie!" said

Grandfather Merrie to himself, "and yet it is not so bad as it might be, he'll lose the profits of the voyage, but thank God he is safe himself,—John must go down and see to the boy."

The next mail brought a letter, and "John" concluded it was not necessary for him to go down, the young captain could do the business himself. We will give his letter.

WELLFLEET, ———

DEAR FATHER:—

You will probably learn before this letter reaches you of the accident to the "Ocean Queen."

It was a terrible gale, and I was afraid at one time that the vessel and all hands would be lost. The boys worked bravely. Jem was behind none of them, but, poor fellow, it was his last voyage. He fell overboard in the storm, and though rescued, it was with a broken leg. He had been three days and nights without sleep; and his constitution, broken by former excess, could not endure the fatigue and exposure. As soon as we came on shore a kind old gentleman, whose appearance reminded me of Grandfather Merrie, offered his house, and aided us in removing Jem there.

I had not slept for sixty hours myself, but I could not leave my poor old playmate in his sufferings.

The limb was set by a skilful surgeon, and he had good nursing and a quiet room. But a fever set in and the doctor said at once that he could not save him, "Disease

makes quick work with these poor fellows who have lived so fast," he said.

"Captain," said Jem, as I sat by his bedside just before he breathed his last, "you've been the means of my salvation; if you had not met me that Sunday morning, I should have gone on to destruction. I have prayed God to be merciful to me a sinner, and I believe he has heard my prayer.

"Oh, how I wish now that I had been an obedient son, and heeded the voice of my good grandfather. I wanted to live to make my mother comfortable in her old age; and if I had not been such a desperate hard fellow I should not have died so soon. God bless her! Tell her that my last prayer will be for her."

He suffered very much, till just before his death, and then he seemed to be easier, and died like falling asleep.

We have buried him in the little graveyard here, and the crew have asked the privilege of erecting a headstone to his memory.

I find myself almost sick, and shall rest here two or three days.

I hope you will see Mrs. Grout immediately, and comfort her all you can. "There was hope in his death."

Do not be anxious about the vessel; she is in good hands, and our loss will not be so great as I feared.

It will not be necessary for you to come. I will inform you often of our progress. When I have rested I will write you again.

Tell mother I am carefully tended, and have every comfort which I need, and many more than I deserve.

Your affectionate son,

CHARLES.

The next letter was directed to his mother, and written nearly a week after the other.

WELLFLEET, ———

DEAR MOTHER:—

I have been confined to my room for some days, from sickness brought on by fatigue and exposure.

I was threatened with fever, but care, good nursing, and (the doctor adds) my vigorous constitution, have triumphed, and I am now better. I shall leave my room to-morrow. You may blame me for not sending for yourself or one of my sisters; and I fancy I hear Fanny say, "How in the world can Charlie get along when he is sick, without me to wait upon him."

Well I have got along so far, nicely, though your round, chubby face would have been a pleasant picture to me this last week. But if I had been an own child of the good people here I could not have been treated more kindly.

I must give you a little description of them. Wellfleet you know, is a small seaport, on Wellfleet harbour, in Cape Cod Bay. Mr. Bates, with whom I am staying, is an old gentleman about grandfather's age. He and his wife live with their only child, James Bates, in a large, old-fashioned farm-house.

The aged couple, their son and wife, and their daughter, a young lady about Mary's age, compose the family.

The old gentleman was for many years captain of a fishing schooner running regularly between here and Nova Scotia. It is now five years since he retired from the business, but he takes as much interest as Grandfather Merrie in every thing that belongs to the sea. A sailor

is always welcome to his table, and a sailor in distress finds here a snug harbour, and kind friends. The old people have a room to themselves, and an open fire as our grandparents have at home, and the children seem to feel that it is a great privilege to take care of them.

Ellen, or Nellie as they call her, is the life of the household. She's "in-door sunshine" said the old man to me one day, when she had been reading the newspaper to him. In taking care of them she has learned to be a good nurse, as her light step, low voice, and well-made gruel in my sick chamber could attest.

I don't wonder they call her sunshine, for she darts like a sunbeam into shady places, making them full of gladness. She can row a boat like any sailor, and once I was told by some of the fishermen here, she launched a life-boat in the absence of the men of the household, and saved the lives of two sailors.

There she is now, I can see her from my window. She has harnessed the horse herself, and is going to take the old people to ride. "Harness a horse, and row a boat!" I hear sister Mary say, "Well, I guess she is not very lady-like."

Perhaps a sailor like myself is not a good judge; but she is gentle in her manners, very neat in her dress, reads French and Latin, makes good bread and pies, and, dear Mary, she reads the Bible and prays with the poor sailors who live down on the beach when they are sick or in trouble.

I frequently sit an hour in the old folks' room; and when I was alone the other day, I amused myself giving a description of them in rhyme.

Do not laugh at me, mother; it was the amusement of

an idle hour, but it is an exact description, and may divert you to read it.

THE OLD FOLKS' ROOM.

THE old man sat by the chimney-side,
His face was wrinkled and wan;
And he leaned both hands on his stout oak-cane
As if all his work were done.

His coat was of good old-fashioned gray,
The pockets were deep and wide,
Where his "specs" and his steel tobacco box
Lay snugly side by side.

The old man liked to stir the fire,
So, near him the tongs were kept,
Sometimes he mused as he gazed at the coals,
Sometimes he sat and slept.

What saw he in the embers there?
Ah! pictures of other years,
And now and then they wakened smiles,
But oftener started tears.

His good wife sat on the other side,
In a high-back, flag-seat chair,
I see 'neath the frill of her muslin cap
The sheen of her silvery hair.

There's a happy look on her aged face,
As she busily knits for him,
And Nellie takes up the stitches dropp'd,
For grandmother's eyes are dim.

Their children come and read the news,
To pass the time each day,
How it stirs the blood in an old man's heart,
To hear of the world away.

'Tis a homely scene, I told you so,
But pleasant it is to view,
At least I thought it so myself,
And sketched it down for you.

Be kind unto the old, my friend,
 They're worn with this world's strife,
 Though bravely once perchance they fought
 The stern fierce battle of life.

They taught our youthful feet to climb
 Upward life's rugged slope;
 Then let us lead them gently down
 To where the weary sleep.

Our vessel is safe in Provincetown, undergoing repairs. The owners will be a thousand dollars out of pocket, but as you and I, father, share with them, I hope there will be no great complaint. I am thankful to have escaped with life, and to have saved my cargo. I trust you and the other owners will not lose their confidence in me. I shall be at home on Wednesday. Home! How pleasant that word looked to my eyes as I wrote it. I want to see you mother, very much. I think sickness and trouble makes us think more of a mother's sympathy and love.

I shall never be a man, if to "want to see mother" is childish.

Love to all.

Your affectionate son,

CHARLES.

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CHAPTER XV.

BRINGING HOME THE BRIDE.

THE young captain continued to prosper, and realized, in a great measure, the wishes of his youth to see foreign countries. He made only one voyage to the Northern Seas, for he had become so accustomed to a tropical climate that he did not wish to return to those frozen regions. On his return, he told his sisters that he would prefer to read about those "eternal wastes of snow," of "icebergs vast," and the "flaming wings of northern lights," than to visit them in person.

Twelve years have past since the time of our first introduction of the reader to the Merrie family,—years through which time had run many bright threads of happiness.

There was the shade of sorrow. Johnnie was not forgotten; but he was always spoken of by the parents as "our child in heaven," and by the children as one whom they hoped to meet again.

Grandfather Merrie was now eighty years of age, and, though vigorous for that time of life, he felt that he could not last long.

"I am waiting cheerfully to go home," he often said. "Death is a blessed boon. How thankful ought the Christian to be, that he can lay aside the body of flesh, and be clothed with a glorious body like that of our ascended Redeemer."

"Father," said the young captain one day, as they were walking in the garden, "Mr. Jones has offered me that vacant lot adjoining our house for three hundred dollars."

"Better buy it," said his father; "by all means buy it. You can sell it for three times that in three years."

"But I would like to build upon it."

"A good idea. This house of mine would sell to-day for almost twice what it cost me."

“Would you like neighbours so near, father?”

“No, not at all, but land is too valuable now to lie unoccupied. I hope you'll sell to some one who will make an agreeable neighbour.”

“How would you like *me*, father?”

“Ha! ha! Charlie, how stupid I am. I might have taken your hint before; but I can think of you only as a little boy. Why that will be almost too pleasant for this world. That your mother and I should have you near us in our old age is a happiness which I dared not anticipate. Charles, God has been very good to me, and sometimes I feel as if it were the fulfilment of His promises. When I was a mere child I learned the commandments from my mother's lips, and she told me that the fifth had a promise of good for this life.”

“I have no recollection of ever disobeying my parents, and God has blessed me in my children. But, Charles, a cage without a bird, you know, would be rather lonesome.”

The old farm-house in Wellfleet had lost two of its occupants.

The good old fisherman and his wife have gone to their rest, and the fresh grass was springing up on their grave.

Captain Charles had visited them frequently before their death ; but he had never asked Nellie to leave them, or to seek any other home than the farm-house as long as she was needed there.

He would not take one beam of sunshine from those who were entering the shadow of death.

But when his own house was completed, and the parents had given their consent, he brought Nellie to his home. There was a pleasant gathering there ; and Charles's mother met the young wife with a sweet welcome, and she soon became one of their household, — precious as the other loved ones of the family.

Their aged minister, Dr. Dane, was there, — very old and feeble he was indeed, just ready to drop into the grave, — but he said that he wished once more to see the family together.

“God bless you, my boy,” said he to Charlie. “You have never forgotten to rise

up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man,' and He, whose promises never fail, will reward you abundantly.

"I mourn for my country when I see the want of reverence for age, and the frequent contempt of authority. It is weakening the very foundation of our commonwealth."

THE END.

up behind the heavy head, and boost the
feet of the old man, and the whole sym-
phony never fails will reward you abund-
antly.

I pause for my country when I see the
land of reverence for age, and the highest
concepts of authority. It is wonderful
the very foundation of our commonwealth.

THE END

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